



MORE FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES



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More Five O'Clock Stories

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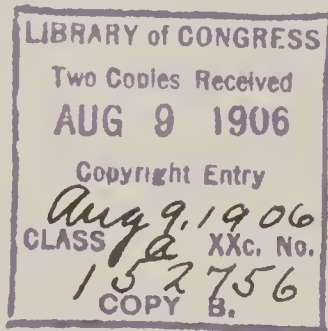
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A RELIGIOUS OF THE
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More Five O'Clock Stories.

A Legend of Saint Walburga.



BEFORE the image of his Lord
A monarch doffed his pride;
And kneeling humbly, there
adored

His Saviour crucified.

And in his simple, childlike faith
He longed some gift to lay
Before the God of love that might
That wondrous love repay.

“An altar to Thine honor, Lord,
These hands of mine shall raise,
Where day and night, with one accord,
The priests may chant Thy praise.

“Thanks to Thy mercy, earth’s fair gifts,
 Father in heaven, are mine;
Take Thou the richest and the best,
 My God, and make them Thine.

“Only from out my treasures, Lord,
 Do Thou but deign to choose
Whate’er Thou wilt, and give me grace
 To know and not refuse.”

Then, from the figure sculptured there,
 It seemed an answer came:
“My servant, I have heard thy prayer;
 Give glory to My name.

“The gift thy love hath offered here
 Shall by thy God be blest;
Wait thou in patience; thou shalt learn
 What gift will please Me best.”

King Richard built a temple fair
 To God’s most holy name;
And watched and waited many a year,
 But still no token came.

Over the green earth, far and wide,
Bright bloomed the flowers at Eastertide;
In grove and copse the wild bird sang,
From tower and town the glad bells rang;
E'en sorrowing hearts grew almost gay
To greet the Resurrection day.
Then good King Richard prayed again,
With patience that was almost pain:
"Give me, O Lord, to know Thy will,
And grace Thy mandate to fulfil.
The treasures of this earth, O Lord,
I hold but at Thy sovereign word;
Content Thy steward here to be,
And give them when Thou wilt to Thee."
So spake the King.

That day there came
Full many a noble knight and dame
To keep the Easter festival
Held in the Saxon monarch's hall.
Amid the throng was none so fair,
So graceful, of such beauty rare,
As the young daughter whom the king
Prized more than any earthly thing.
The best and noblest in the land
Contended for Walburga's hand;

And many a prince from o'er the sea
Had wooed the lady for his bride;
While dearer to her sire was she
Than all he owned or loved beside.

Now on that sunny Easter morn
Before the throne she, suppliant, stood;
King Richard smiled in softened mood.

“She comes an Easter gift to crave:—
Say now, what wouldst thou, daughter mine?
Spoiled one! thou needst but ask to have;
Since all thy father's heart is thine.”
Bright flushed the timid maiden's cheek,
With tears the downcast eyes were dim:
“Father, my Lord His spouse doth seek,
And I would give myself to Him.”
Give her! She was the fairest flower,
The sweetest blossom in his bower;
And he had dreamed, as fathers may,
That she would soothe life's closing day.
Her brothers stately were and tall,
Gallant and brave—he loved them all.
But she had been his heart's delight,
His joy by day, his dream by night,
Since first, a babe, beside his knee,

She prattled in her childish glee.
Give her to heaven! It might not be!
It *could* not be. Then soft and low,
Within the monarch's troubled breast,
Whispered the Voice heard long ago—
"That which thou offerest shall be blest;
Wait thou in patience; thou shalt know
What gift will please Me best."

Was this the gift? And he had dreamed
Of stately church and altar fair,
Of wealth bestowed,—but never deemed
God would ask gift more rare.
He had but thought of gold or gem,
Perchance of earthly diadem,
Or life-blood freely given;
But this! O King, didst thou not say
Before the crucifix that day,
Thy *best* should be for heaven?
This was the token—this the sign—
King Richard knew the choice divine,
And meekly bowed his head.
"My best! My dearest! She is Thine!
Take her, O Lord," he said.
So from her father's halls that day

The gentle princess passed away,
Her place was there no more;
But where the waves sweet music made
She dwelt, in sable robes arrayed,
Beside green Devon's shore.

Years came and went, now fast, now slow,
As still the years must come and go;
And now upon the Kentish shore
King Richard held his state no more;
The leader of a pilgrim band,
The monarch left his native land,
For holy places bound;
But ere he reached the gates of Rome
God called His well-beloved home;
Sweet rest the wanderer found.
Mid Lucca's groves of olives green
Still may the Saxon's grave be seen
Where his two sons their father laid
In St. Frigidian's holy fane,—
Then passed with courage undismayed
Upon their pilgrim way again.

The fair spring flow'rets bloomed and died
At many a joyous Eastertide;

And still Walburga dwelt alone.
Sire, brothers, kinsfolk,—all had gone.
To do—to act—as men, was theirs;
A woman's part—to bear—was hers;
Until at last a message came
That called her, in God's holy name,
To quit her quiet convent cell,
And cross the lone, mysterious sea;
Henceforth in far-off lands to dwell,
Mid pagan hordes, her lot must be.
Pain could the royal spirit bear,
The royal soul could do and dare.
She learned Thuringia's wilds to roam
Secure as in her convent home.
At her soft accents, low and sweet,
The savage hounds crouched at her feet.
Her will the elements obeyed;
Angelic light around her played;
And to her gentle hand was given
The power to heal the body's pain,
While erring souls, at war with heaven,
Sought, at her word, God's peace again.
Their little ones about her feet
The wild, half-pagan mothers brought,
And listened, wondering, to the sweet,

Grave lessons by the lady taught;
Their unskilled hands she trained to hold
Distaff and spindle, and to weave
Fair webs of glittering silk and gold,
The while of Jesus' love she told,
And bade them pray at morn and eve.

So passed her life in toil and prayer;—
And when her soul was called away,
A glory such as angels wear
Made beautiful her lifeless clay.
Fragrance not breathed by earthly flowers
Floated about her lowly bier,
And all the waxen torches flamed
While yet no human hand was near.

For many a year the people came,
Their sorrows and their needs to tell,
Around the grave where she was laid
Who erst had loved them all so well.
Then from the breast that, by God's grace,
So oft had grieved at others' woe
Clear drops of fair and fragrant oil,
Like crystal dew, was seen to flow.
And as in life her hand had wrought

Wonders of healing by God's power,
So through the ages since her death
She worketh to this very hour.

O loved Walburga! Royal gift
Of royal sire, so richly blest!
Give us with thee God's face to see;
Lead us to heaven's eternal rest!





Thorette.

THORETTE! None of us ever heard of such a word. Is it a name? It is not a pretty one—and it looks and sounds very French. It need be none the worse for that, let us hope, since it is French; and as to its sound—wait until you have heard the story I am going to tell you. Then, I think, you will agree with me in pronouncing the legend of Thorette one of the very sweetest that have come down to us from the far-off ages of faith; and who knows but you may have learned to like the name, ugly as it now seems to you, for the sake of its bearer. Such things have been known to happen sometimes.

Nearly a thousand years ago there lived in a village in France a worthy farmer and his wife who received into their home a little or-

phan named Thorette. The child had been left without parents or means of support, and these good people believed in adopting her they were doing an act of charity that must be pleasing alike to God and man, and probably they were right in their belief. But like many who live in these days they had no idea of giving something for nothing; and while doubtless looking for a reward in heaven for their good deed, they determined to make even in this world such profit as they might from Thorette's presence in their house.

As soon as the child could hold a distaff she was taught to spin, and she learned to lead the flocks to the pasture at an age when most of you would be still under the care of a nurse. But every day before setting forth to her labors, whether to watch the sheep or cattle in summer, or to spin, her task in the cottage during the long winter days, Thorette always went to hear holy Mass in the church of the monks of Villefranche, which was very near the village where she lived. Have you ever noticed, in reading the lives of the saints who have been very dear to Our Lord, how

many of them have been shepherds? It is as though He were especially attracted by their simplicity, or, perhaps, by constantly dwelling among His beautiful works they become especially attracted to Him. It was so in the days of old when His chosen people, the children of Jacob, kept their flocks upon the green hillsides of Judea, and later on, almost in our own day, the holy Curé d'Ars and Dom Bosco, the children's friend, began life as herders of sheep and tenders of cattle.

I can not tell you who first led the little maiden to turn her heart to God, or taught her to spend in prayer the long hours she passed alone in the meadows or seated by the wide hearth in the farmhouse. Perhaps the good monks at the Abbey saw and knew the peasant girl who came each morning without fail to Mass, and taught her her prayers and catechism, as was the custom of religious then as now. After she knew how to perform the duties they wished her to fulfil, the people at the farm troubled themselves very little about her, beyond seeing that she was supplied with such coarse food as they could give her,

and clothed with such garments as the peasants wore. They never thought of providing amusement for the child, or of teaching her anything except to love God and her neighbor and to be truthful and honest in her dealings with all.

It never came into their heads that the little maiden might feel lonely during those long days in the meadows when from morning till night she had no companions save the dumb creatures she tended, and whom, doubtless, she learned to love—as they loved her—but who could not be anything but dumb creatures after all. Then it was that the angels of God, who are never far from His little ones, took pity on the child and drew her heart toward Him as though she saw Him, and she forgot that she was alone. The whispering leaves, the song of the birds, the breeze, and the sunshine, were as so many open books to Thorette, wherein she read of the infinite beauty and goodness of the God who created them, and of His love for the creatures He has made.

It happened one day, as she sat spinning

alone under the shadow of a tree in the meadow, with her sheep grazing around her and stopping now and then to look up at her with great innocent eyes, that Thorette thought much of her guardian angel, of whom, it may be, she had lately heard from her teachers the monks; and she wondered how that prince of the heavenly court, who might stand always in the presence of the God whom Thorette herself so longed to see, could bear to come down from his magnificent throne above the clouds and sunshine, to watch over and guard a poor little peasant maiden who knew nothing save how to tend sheep, and spin, and say her prayers. And then she wished that, since he was so near and could lose nothing more by making himself visible to her, she might, just for once, look upon her angel and so catch a glimpse of the wonderful glory of God. And scarcely knowing that she spoke, she said to him, "O beautiful angel, wilt thou not come to me? May I not look upon thee just once?" And even as she spoke a sweet voice answered her, "What wouldst thou, Thorette, for I am

here?" And Thorette saw standing beside her a being so beautiful that I can not hope to make you understand how marvelously beautiful he was.

He was clothed in white, but his robe was like moonlight, and a crown of light was on his head. His face was of surpassing loveliness, and his voice like music, but such music as Thorette had never heard till then. She was startled at first, but not frightened, for the angel's face was full of sweetness; and as he stood beside the child he shaded her bare head from the sun with one of those wonderful wings, as though it were natural to him to do for earth's children every act of kindness that came in his way. And the little one nestled closer to his side as she would have nestled closer to the mother whom God had taken, before her child had known a mother's love. She did not speak, for her heart was filled with happiness and she had forgotten everything in the beauty of her heavenly visitor. So he bent over her, and spoke again.

"I have come, as thou hast willed, Thor-

ette," he said; "what wouldst thou, now that I am here?"

"Beautiful angel," said Thorette, "I would know, so please thee, how it is that thou canst leave thy throne in heaven, close to the side of the good God, to stay all day in these lonely meadows with a poor little maiden like me."

"I come to thee, Thorette, because it is His will that I should be with thee; but whilst I am with thee I still remain with Him. Hast thou not heard that the angels of the children always see His face in heaven?"

Then Thorette remembered, for she had heard this before; but the thing was hard to understand. So she said again: "I have heard that from the priest in our village, beautiful angel, but I see not how it may be. And I wish sometimes that thou couldst go for a day to the other lovely ones who stand before Him, for I fear that thou art lonely here."

"Wouldst thou that I should leave thee, Thorette?"

"Not so that thou shouldst return to me no more, oh no; but methinks that thou must

pine for thy beautiful heaven, and be lonely, as I am sometimes."

The angel smiled upon Thorette. "I am never lonely, little one," he answered; "as I said to thee, the angels always look upon the face of God. Dost thou love Him?"

The child's face grew almost radiant as the angel spoke, and her heart burned hotly with the thought of heaven. She clasped her hands, as she replied: "Ah, most truly I love Him. I love the flowers, and the birds, and the sunshine, because they speak to me of Him. But to thee they can say nothing, beautiful angel, because thou knowest so much more about Him than they."

"I know more of Him indeed, Thorette," said the angel; "yet to me doth all Creation sing His glory, even as to thee. But now because thou hast been faithful to the lessons they have given thee, I have come to-day to teach thee yet more of His love. Canst thou pray?"

Thorette prayed much, as I have told you; indeed, she often spent whole days in prayer. But now when the angel asked her this

question, it seemed to her as if she knew nothing of the science of God, and she answered very humbly, and blushing, for she was ashamed: "Alas, no, beautiful angel; I am a poor ignorant child. Wilt thou not teach me that which I should know?"

Then the angel stooped down over Thorette and laid one hand upon her head, while with the other he gently took away her distaff; and he said: "Thorette, thou hast ever striven in thy loneliness to love and serve thy God. Therefore hath He listened to thy prayer to-day and sent me to speak with thee. And now thou shalt learn how it is that His angels come from heaven to keep guard over His children and yet ever abide before His face."

And now a strange thing happened to Thorette. She raised her eyes to the blue heavens and her heart to God, and straightway her soul was rapt in prayer. She forgot her sheep and her spinning, and even the angel who still stood by her side. What she saw or heard I can not tell you. Such things are known only to God's saints. So you and

I must wait until we get to heaven to see them. But hours passed by and she still sat there, and the angel did not leave her all that time. The sheep gathered round and looked into her face, but she did not see them. She never once thought of the task of spinning that must be finished before she went back to the farm. Thorette's soul was in heaven. The birds sang, the stream rippled, the leaves "clapped their hands and whispered their benedicites," and the glorious sun sank slowly in the west, but Thorette heeded none of these things. Hitherto they had helped to raise her soul to God, but to-day she had teaching better than theirs.

At last the angel spoke again, and called, "Thorette!" Then the eyes of the little maiden came slowly back to earth—but not her heart—and she answered like one not yet awakened, "Here I am." And the angel said: "The sun is sinking, and it is time for thee to return to the farm. The sheep are gathering about thee, Thorette."

Then the little maiden glanced around her and remembered with a deep sigh where she

was. The angel said, "Where hast thou been during these long hours?" And the child answered: "Beautiful angel, I have been speaking with God."

Then the angel gave her her distaff, which was empty, and her spindle, all filled with finely spun wool. "See, I have finished thy task for thee," he said; "and now it is time to return home. The gift of prayer hath been bestowed on thee, Thorette; and thou hast learned how it is that I can remain with thee and yet look ever on the face of God. Farewell; but I will come to thee again."

The angel disappeared, and Thorette called her flock and went home. She spoke to none of what had befallen her—not even to the good monks who were her friends; partly because it was a secret that she wished not to disclose and partly because in her humility she thought that like favors from heaven were bestowed on all the peasant maidens who kept their flocks in the valley or on the hills. And from that day her angel often came to her again. When the Spirit of God descended on her and her soul

was rapt in prayer, he took the distaff as it fell from her hand and worked at her spinning until it was done, and the good women of the village marveled that the thread she spun was ever whiter and finer than theirs. She grew in grace and stature like a flower in the wilderness, and her face was beautiful with a beauty that was not of earth. Many and great were the wonders that happened to her, but to her they seemed not wonderful because she deemed that to others they happened as to her.

She stood by the brook once when the stream was swollen by the rain and the waters were too deep to ford. The night was coming on and she must needs reach the village before darkness should overtake her, for wolves were abroad in the forest and she feared for her sheep. Then she remembered how she had heard in the church that Our Lord had said to His disciples that if they had faith but as a grain of mustard-seed they should move mountains; and was she not a disciple, too? So she struck the stream with her distaff, and straightway the waters ceased to

flow. In a few minutes the bed of the brook was dry, and Thorette with her sheep passed over, so the legend tells, without soiling their feet. It never once entered the maiden's head to speak of this miracle. Indeed, she did not think it was a miracle at all. Our Lord had given His word that such wonders should be wrought by them who believe, and she had no doubt but they chanced to others every day. The good people with whom she lived set her to work in the fields all day and allowed her to wait upon them like a servant when she came home; thinking, perhaps, that what she did was but a fair return for all that their charity had done for her. They never guessed, and there was none to tell them, that for all those years they had been entertaining an angel unawares.

Now as time went on and she grew older the habit of prayer became constant with Thorette. Sometimes her angel stood beside her in visible form and spun her wool or watched her flock while she prayed; but sometimes he did not show himself to her bodily eyes. When this happened Thorette

was not disturbed. She stuck her crook or her distaff in the green turf at her side and bade her sheep keep within sight of it, and the gentle animals always obeyed. Sometimes she left them alone, except that the angels were with them, and forbade them to stray, whilst she paid long visits to the church and knelt before the tabernacle which contained the Beloved of her soul. They were always safe when she returned. Wolves and other wild beasts abounded in that country then; not infrequently they came out of the forest and devoured the flocks of others, but no accident ever happened to Thorette's. Her sheep were the finest, as her thread was the whitest and smoothest, that were seen on the farms; and the neighboring peasants envied those with whom she lived, because there was no other maiden like her and all things prospered in her hands.

It happened one day that Thorette came to the side of the brook when the stream was swollen and too deep for any to pass through it to the other side. And she found some strangers standing there who had come from

the city, where, perhaps, men were more godless than among the woods and meadows, to assist the monks in repairing the church. They knew not how to get across the stream, and in their anger and impatience began to blaspheme the holy name of God. It chanced, happily for Thorette, that among the simple village folk she had never heard such language as this, but the purity of her heart taught her that it was something terrible as well as new, and she ran to the men and begged them to desist, for that the God whom they were blaspheming would make a way for them across the stream. Then she struck the waters with her distaff, the same which had so often been held in angel hands, and bade the swollen current give place for a while.

The stream obeyed her as before, and the men looked on in amazement until she told them to cross the brook and praise God. They hastened on and published everywhere the wonder they had seen; while Thorette followed more slowly with her flock. Before she reached home the farmer and his wife had heard the marvelous tale of the miracle

worked by the little shepherdess of whom they had thought nothing until now. They threw themselves at her feet when she entered the house, and besought her to pardon them all the sharp words they had ever given her and the drudgery they had permitted her to do. Worst of all, they promised that in future they would be her faithful servants and obey her in all things just as hitherto she had been obedient to them.

Thorette was terrified, and knew not what to think of the praises and benedictions so suddenly lavished upon her; but after a time she understood that she was looked upon as a worker of miracles, and as one not like the rest of the girls who tended the flocks on the farms. This was more than her humility could bear; so one day she stole quietly away from the house and fled toward the forest. She wandered far into the wood, but never to any great distance from her beloved church at Villefranche, and at last came to a hollow oak-tree which was so old that it looked as if it might have been there from the beginning of the world. There was a space inside

almost as large as the tiny room that she had occupied at home, and she knew that she could live during the summer on the roots and wild berries that grew in the wood. A clear spring that bubbled up through the moss at the foot of the oak-tree would supply her with water, and for winter God would provide. But winter never came for Thorette. She lived in her wild solitude, and although her friends did their best to find her, they could not learn whither she had fled. Only the monks at Villefranche knew the place of her retreat, and they would not betray the secret of the servant of God.

But early one morning, as the laborers were setting out to their work, and before the first Mass at the abbey had begun, all the countryside was startled by a wonderful sound. At first no one could guess what it might be; but presently, full and clear over field and forest, rang out the unwonted music, and then all knew the sound of the bells. What could it mean? Not alone the bells of the monastery were ringing, but those of all the churches far and near. Forth from the houses

trooped the peasants, gazing terror-stricken into one another's face to learn, if might be, what this wonder might portend. No one could tell; so they set forth with one accord to the abbey to see if by chance the abbot might know what had befallen or wherefore the bells were ringing at an hour when they had never been heard to ring before. They found the good monks all astir and astonished, but unable to explain the mystery of the bells until, after lifting up his soul to God in prayer, the abbot said:

"My children, this is indeed a marvel which hath seldom chanced before. For in yonder belfry and in many others the bells are ringing, and in ours at least I wot they are not rung by human hands. Never hath such a wonder happed within the memory of man. But yet have I heard of a like thing befalling in the Holy City when the blessed youth Alexius was called to his reward. The angels rang his requiem, and it was more like unto a peal of rejoicing even as is this to which we listen now. Therefore do I judge that a saint hath passed away."

And the brethren and all the people who stood there responded, "Then Thorette is dead." And the sound of the bells led them to the forest and to the foot of the old oak. And there indeed they found the body of the maiden, and her blessed soul had passed to God. She lay as if asleep, upon the ground within the hollow of the oak that for the last few weeks had been her home; and the peasants all knelt in prayer about the old tree which had thus become a shrine. The body of the holy maiden was borne reverently to Villefranche and buried by the monks within the Church. Many were the miracles wrought by God's mercy at the tomb, and in the course of ages people came from all parts of the country to pray there and do homage to the virtues of Thorette. At the time of the French Revolution her shrine was desecrated, like so many others, but her relics were afterward recovered and restored to the church wherein she had been honored so long.

I have heard in my time, as perhaps, children, you also may have, of persons who are troubled with distractions when at prayer,

Do you not agree with me in thinking that it may be a good idea to suggest to such unfortunates that they may possibly obtain help in their trouble by invoking the sweet little Saint Thorette?

Saint Thorette, pray for us.





The Counted Footsteps.



NE, two, three, four,"
Said a voice ; yet none was near,
Save a hermit, troubled sore
And perplexed that voice to hear.
Bright the sun of Eastern lands
O'er him poured its noontide heat,
And the scorching desert sands
Lay beneath his aching feet.

In his hand he bore a pitcher,
'And to fill it at the well
Many a mile he traversed daily
From his distant hermit cell.

'Twas a toil by love first prompted
In the days of youth long past ;
But his spirit had grown weary,
And his strong heart failed at last.

So to-day he had determined
That to-morrow rest should bring;
He would leave his lonely dwelling
And abide beside the spring.

But he scarce had formed his purpose
Ere he paused in sudden fright
When he heard that sad voice counting
And no human form in sight.

As he paused the voice ceased also;
He resumed his way again;
And the voice resumed its counting
In the low, sad tones of pain.

Then the hermit, half affrighted,
Cried, "Whatever thou mayst be,
Whether come of light or darkness,
Show thyself and speak to me."

On the burning sands beside him
Saw he then an angel bright,
With a crown of dazzling splendor
And a robe of radiant white.

And he said: "I count the footsteps
That to-day with toil and pain
For the love of God thou takest,
But wilt never take again.

"Through the wide world men are striving,
Some for riches, some for fame,
Some for love of home or kindred,
Some to clear a tarnished name.

"Toiling on with footsteps weary
Till the heart and brain grow dim;
They are spent on God's poor creatures—
Thou hast spent thyself for Him.

"But thy love hath now been vanquished,
And thy strength is of the past;
So I sadly count the footsteps
That will be, for Him, thy last.

"And when death thy soul shall summon
To appear before thy God,
Thou wilt weep the steps untaken,
And the desert path untrod."

Like a cool breeze sweeping o'er him
Passed the angel on his way ;
And the hermit, hurrying homeward,
Changed his dwelling-place that day

To a grotto twice as distant ;
Marveling much that God should deem
His poor footsteps worth the counting—
But, "Things are not what they seem."





Saint Vincent Ferrer and His Donkey.

IT seems to be the fashion just now to think and to write a great deal about the dumb things of creation—and I suppose there never was a time in the world's history wherein so much was said of kindness to animals and in praise of the beauty of inanimate things—which is all very well in its way. But that way is one on which people may travel a little too far, and occasionally do so. We are almost led to suppose that some writers believe man to have been made for the sake of the lower portion of the creation, instead of the truth; which is that the lower creation was made for him and to minister to his needs and even to his desires.

Now I read a story some time ago about a stove—yes, actually a *stove*—very handsome, very uncommon, very valuable too, but only

a stove after all, which a boy is described as loving more than he loved father, sisters, brothers or home. Of the God who made him he never seemed to think at all. That story appeared to me very pagan indeed. In another a lady who is described as having been an abbess and a saint imprisons her steward for three days in a pen in the barn-yard and gives him nothing to eat but oatmeal and water to punish him for shooting a wild goose which belonged to nobody and making it into a pie. Now, who has ever come upon any commandment in any catechism that forbids people to eat goose pie? If that good abbess were living now, I wonder what she would do after Thanksgiving day in this country! However, the fact is that the writer of that story made a mistake. I know a good deal about Saint Wereburga; and what she really did was to order a flock of wild geese who were upsetting her steward's peace of mind by ravaging the abbey corn-fields to alight in a green paddock, which they did. And without doubt the abbess fed them there to make up what they lost among the wheat.

It is true, as we learn from the history of the saints, that almighty God often gave His chosen servants who had learned well how to govern themselves great power over animals; and Our Lord said that if His disciples had faith but as a grain of mustard-seed they might move mountains. It is true, too, that those who love and reverence their Creator must also love and even reverence the work of His Hands. But the power is given that it may be used for His honor and glory; the love and reverence are really to be referred to Him. If we give our affection to dumb animals or other creatures lower than ourselves for their own sake, we shall become little better than pagans. The birds and beasts must obey us—we may never under any circumstances become subservient to them, although we may doubtless learn many lessons from them with much profit to ourselves.

Now for Saint Vincent and his donkey.

Saint Vincent Ferrer was a Spanish Dominican friar who died in the beginning of the fifteenth century, not much more than one hundred years before the beginning of the so-

called "Great Reformation". You know that the Dominicans are often called the Friars Preachers because one great purpose of their vocation is to preach to the people and teach them, first—what they are to believe; and next—how to live up to what faith teaches. Saint Vincent Ferrer was one of the greatest preachers that ever lived, and his superiors sent him about continually from one place to another wherever the people were worst and most in need of his teachings. And God blessed his words so that immense numbers who heard him were converted from their evil ways, and began to frequent the sacraments and to lead really good lives.

For many years the good saint made all his long journeys on foot, as was the custom among religious in those days; but after a while he began to grow old and was unable to travel as he had hitherto done. So then a little grey donkey was given to him, and he went from one city or village to another upon that. The name of the donkey was Asinello, and as he was gentle and docile, and could do with fare harder even than Saint Vincent's

own, which proved him to be in the highest degree sober and temperate, his master became very fond of him.

Did you know that ever since the first Palm Sunday, when our divine Lord entered Jerusalem riding upon an ass, every donkey has been marked with a cross? It is so. I have seen white donkeys, black donkeys, brown donkeys, grey donkeys, and donkeys that seemed to be of no particular color at all, but I never saw one without its cross. Of course Asinello had one too, and very handsome it must have been—a clearly marked black cross on his smooth grey skin—and you may be quite sure that Saint Vincent loved him all the more because he wore his Master's badge.

Well, as I told you, the holy friar went up and down, up and down, sometimes from one end of the country to the other, and Asinello trotted bravely along, never grumbling or complaining, even when the roads were dusty and dry and the sun beating down like the heat of a furnace, as it so often does in Spain. He knew that his kind master would remember him and that rest and supper would

surely come in time. As a rule they did, although St. Vincent never carried any money, but relied on the charity of the good people whom he met for both shelter and food. They were generally glad to give him whatever he needed, and neither Asinello nor his master often remained long with their wants unsupplied.

Once, however, things fell out different in this wise. The journeys had been long and the roads stony and rough, so that one by one poor Asinello's shoes wore out, and even with the best will in the world—which he had—the brave little fellow could not get on. Three shoes were loose and one lost altogether, and Saint Vincent feared that his faithful friend must fall lame. What was to be done? They were out in the country, but happily, at no great distance from a village; and in that village dwelt a clever blacksmith who could shoe donkeys better and more expeditiously than any blacksmith in Spain. So, at least, a little boy whom he questioned assured the good friar.

Saint Vincent set off at once to find this

clever blacksmith, leading Asinello, who limped after him painfully enough but putting a brave heart on the matter for all that. When they reached the smithy the friar begged the man to put shoes on his donkey for the love of God. The blacksmith declared that he desired nothing better, and set to work immediately, civilly asking Saint Vincent to sit down and rest on a bench outside the forge while he was at work. This the saint was glad to do, for he had been traveling and preaching all day, and was nearly worn out with fatigue.

Asinello was shod in a very short time, and Saint Vincent was preparing to mount and resume his journey after thanking the smith for his charity, when the man stopped him and demanded payment for the shoes, angrily accusing Vincent of having cheated him, and calling him thief, impostor, and many other hard names. It was all in vain that the saint reminded him that he had been asked to shoe Asinello for the love of God. The smith declared that nothing of the kind had been said, or, if it had, he had not understood what

Vincent meant when he said it; and that the donkey should not go away from the shop wearing those shoes until they were paid for. Now evening was coming on. Asinello and his master were both very tired, but the convent must be reached before night. The saint felt sad as he thought of what his little patient friend must suffer while walking with feet unshod over the rough stones; but—what must be must be.

So he laid his hand on the animal's neck and said:

“Asinello, we have no money; and this good man thinks himself too poor to bestow shoes on thee for the love of God. We can not take by force what he will not give freely, so thou must even return to him thy new shoes. Give them back, my friend.”

And lo and behold! Asinello lifted first one foot and then another and shook them gently, until one by one the shoes fell off and lay on the ground before the blacksmith who had nailed them on so securely a few moments before. The man was so astonished at first that he stood quite stupefied and could neither

speak nor move, for he had never known such a thing to happen in his life before. But he came to himself presently and fell on his knees before Vincent, entreating the saint to pardon him and to obtain forgiveness of his avarice from God. Then he shod Asinello once more, but demanded no payment this time. Rather he begged Saint Vincent to come to him whenever the little donkey should be in need of shoes; and entreated the good saint to remember him, the blacksmith, in his prayers; since such intercession would profit him more than all the money that could be paid for his work.

There are many stories told of Saint Vincent Ferrer which are both wonderful and delightful; but we can not afford space for more than one or two. You must read the life of the saint some day. But one little story you must have now. It happened on one occasion that the friar was passing through one of the streets of Valencia, when he was horrified upon hearing cries of rage, loud shrieks, rude reproaches, and the most fearful oaths and blasphemies uttered in a house near

by. The door was open, and Vincent at once went in to discover the origin of the uproar, and to put a stop to the bad language if he could. The master of the house, who appeared to be choking with rage, passed out as the saint entered, and inside he found a woman cursing and swearing in a most horrible manner. She was weeping at the same time as if her heart would break. Vincent saw at once that the poor creature was suffering intensely; and after waiting a little while until she had become quieter from sheer exhaustion, he seated himself beside her and very gently asked her what her trouble was and whether he could do anything to help her.

"Have no fear, my daughter," he said; "for it may be that in some way I can help you. Tell me what has happened to disturb you so greatly to-day."

"Alas, Father," sobbed the poor woman, "it is not to-day, but every day, and every hour of the day. My husband beats me and maltreats me until my life has become a hell upon earth."

"But why does he treat you so?" inquired

Saint Vincent; "do you provoke him by sharp words, or what?"

"No, no," answered the unhappy wife; "I never use hard language or provoke him in any way until I can bear his bad usage no longer. But he hates me because I am so ugly that he can not bear to see me in his house. And I wish that I could kill him, or else that I were dead."

"Hush, hush," said Saint Vincent, but very gently, for he was sorry for the woman, who certainly was suffering for what was no fault of her own, since like most other people she would gladly have been beautiful if she could; "hush, hush, my child. To give way to anger will offend God, and do you no good. And so your husband dislikes you because you are ugly! Lift your face and let me look at you."

The woman raised her head, and showed a face of whose beauty or ugliness it must have been difficult to judge, so swollen and disfigured was it with weeping and rage.

"Poor child," said Saint Vincent tenderly, and laying his hand on her head he drew it

gently down her cheek. "Now dry your tears," he added; "and thank our good God, for your husband will never again maltreat you because you are ugly."

And he never did; for the touch of the saint's hand had changed her appearance so entirely that she had become the most beautiful woman in the town. Saint Vincent preached her a very short and very kind sermon, made her promise to govern her temper and, above all, never again to blaspheme the infinite goodness of God, and then went once more upon his way. People soon noticed the change in the face which they had known to be so ugly, and saw so beautiful now, and the miracle gave rise to a proverb; for ever after when an unusually ugly woman was seen in Valencia they said, and probably say to this day, "Poor thing! she needs a touch of the hand of Saint Vincent."



Saint Kentigern and the Robin.



HE blessed Servan was a saint ap-
proved;
His heart, like to his Lord's, em-
braced all;
He loved the little children first; but loved
God's creatures, great and small.

Of dumb things most he loved a robin tame;
Of grateful nature was the little bird;
At chirp or whistle to his hand it came,
And left him at a word.

His school was thronged with students old
and young
Who flocked about the holy man to learn
All godly manners and the Latin tongue—
Among them Kentigern.

A little lad he was, of princely race,
Younger, but quicker far, than all the rest—
In class and choir he took the foremost place;
And Servan loved him best.

Not so the scholars; for with one accord
They heaped ill usage on the gracious boy;
Gave him rough blows and many a spiteful
word;
And wrought him sore annoy.

And hid the books he loved, that Servan's
wrath
Against his favorite might enkindled be;
Strewed obstacles upon his upward path—
He bore all patiently.

And conned his lessons, said his prayers, and
sang;
And labored at his tasks with right good will;
Lighted the tapers, and the church bell rang;
And Servan loved him still.

Till turn to tend the fire that day and night
Upon the broad hearth evermore must burn,

To feed it with huge logs and keep alight,
Came round for Kentigern.

Then in the silence of the night they came,
Those evil scholars, and upon the wood
They water poured, and quenched the burn-
ing flame;
Doing the worst they could.

Up rose the boy at deepest dead of night,
And found a heap of ashes cold and grey;
And all the logs were wet—he could not light
The fire by dawn of day.

But with a smile he stretched his hands and
prayed:
“Thou seest my trouble, Lord; send help to
me!”

And even as his simple prayer he made
The fire burned cheerily.

Then waxed the scholars wroth, and vowed
that they
Would work his ruin for the hate they bore;
Which ever stronger grew from day to day,
As Servan loved him more.

They seized the robin that the Master loved,
And from its fluttering body wrenched the
head;

Then, as by righteous indignation moved,
Bore it to Servan, dead.

“ ‘Twas wicked Kentigern,” they loudly
cried ;

“We saw him lure the creature to his cell;
And then its neck he twisted till it died,
Though thou dost love it well.”

With streaming eyes the tale the Master
heard;

And cried, "How couldst thou thus ungrateful be—

Didst thou not know I loved the little bird
Even as I loved thee?"

Then Kentigern: "It is a lie they tell.
The God of truth will prove their words un-
true ;

Master, I know thou lovest the robin well;
Have I not loved it too?"

The head and body on each hand outspread
He took; the hands upraised and prayed once
more:

“Do Thou who givest life to all,” he said,
“The robin’s life restore.”

And lo, a wonder! fluttered the dead wings,
While half the master hoped and half he
feared;
They heard a sound as when a robin sings;
And Kentigern was cleared.

The robin flew to his loved master’s hand;
And raised a song right shrill, and clear, and
loud;
And Kentigern, abashed, was forced to stand
’Mid a repentant crowd.

They knelt about his feet his hand to kiss;
They prayed for pardon of their evil ways;
And all the days he spent at school, I wis,
Henceforth were happy days.



Saint Ninian's Staff.



DOUBT very much whether you know anything of Saint Ninian; perhaps many of you have never heard his name. So before telling you the story of his staff I had better introduce the good saint, and then you will feel more at home with him. Saint Ninian lived as long ago as the seventh century, and was a Scotchman—and a Christian. Scotland had already been converted from positive heathenism, but the people were rude in manners and badly instructed in the faith—there were no Baltimore Catechisms in the seventh century—and great mistakes were made even by the clergy on many important points, simply through want of knowledge of what was the right thing to do. Perhaps the Scottish Christians were a trifle obstinate too—that ran in their Gaelic blood—but they suffered

from ignorance more than anything, and by some means or other Ninian found this out. That is, he discovered that he himself was a very ignorant person, and forthwith he determined to learn all about the true faith and its practices in the right way, and then to do his best to teach his countrymen.

So he went away, since there were no means at that time of finding out in Scotland what he wanted to know, and lived for some time in a monastery in England. When he had learned all that the monks could teach him there, he set out again and eventually reached Rome, where he resolved to remain until he was thoroughly well instructed, not only in the faith but also in all the practices of our holy religion—and to carry out the ceremonies of the Church in the right way.

All this took many years, but Ninian persevered and never allowed himself to grow tired; and at last, after he had been a priest a long while and had grown to middle age, he returned to Scotland, where he became Bishop of Glasgow, and built a Church and monastery not far from the river Clyde.

Here too he opened a school, and gladly received all the boys whose parents would send them to him, because he wished to train them up in all the wisdom and knowledge he had been at so much pains to acquire. He soon had a great many pupils, and the rude, half-savage lads, for such indeed they were, were glad to live with and be taught by the good bishop and his monks who were so unlike the rough clansmen among whom they had hitherto lived. But, however good and gentle the religious were, neither they nor anybody else ever dreamed in those days of allowing young people to do just as they chose. If Ninian's pupils behaved well and studied as they ought, life went smoothly enough; but on the other hand, if they were idle or did not obey, if they showed any disposition to walk in the way of the ungodly, they had to take the consequences, and that was punishment more or less severe according to the nature and malice of the offence committed.

Now, there happened to be in the monastery school a wild youth named Conon who was forever getting into mischief and playing mad

pranks. In his own home he was the son of a half-heathen chief who was proud of his boy's wilfulness and daring; at school he was only Conon, often the last in his class and constantly getting chidden for his wild ways. He loved Saint Ninian, however, in spite of many a scolding; for at heart Conon was generous, and knew well that the reproofs of the holy bishop were right well deserved. And from Ninian he took reproof and even punishment quietly enough. But he liked little to receive the same kind of discipline from others; and when at last he was threatened with a flogging which beyond all doubt he richly deserved, all the proud Gaelic spirit rose up within him, and Conon resolved that rather than submit to such an indignity he would run away.

You know that Glasgow stands, and stood then, on the River Clyde, from which nowadays are sent out some of the finest steamships in the world. There were no steamships, of course, in Conon's time, but even then the dwellers on the Scottish river were great boat-builders, only that the vessels they

built, instead of being great merchant ships or ironclads, were light coracles made of osiers, like immense baskets, and were covered with hides prepared in a peculiar way that rendered them water-proof. Conon had no intention of traveling by land on leaving the monastery; but he knew where a great many coracles had quite lately been made, and he thought that he might slip down to the river in the twilight, when the monks were chanting office in the choir, jump into a coracle (which he knew quite well how to manage), float off down the river, and be far away before any one had even guessed that he was gone. The dishonesty of taking a coracle which did not belong to him does not appear to have entered Conon's mind—but then, he was in a passion with himself and the monks, and of course did not stop to consider. In a passion few people do.

When evening came and the monks were singing compline in choir, Conon, who ought to have been in church like everybody else in the monastery, slipped quietly down the long cloister that led to the gate. He was as

angry as possible, and just as determined as ever to escape the punishment the morrow would bring if it found him there; but he had received much kindness from the monks whom he was so ungratefully leaving; and his heart ached with the thought that he should never see Saint Ninian, his friend and benefactor, again. He was not all bad, you see. Few people are, I suppose; and certainly no children, though they can be quite as trying as if they were.

As he crept stealthily down the corridor, peeping about in all directions to make sure that no one was watching, Conon saw standing in a corner against the wall a staff. It was only a sapling which had been cut down in the forest long ago, and was now all shining and polished with age. But it was Ninian's. With the aid of that staff the holy bishop was accustomed to journey from one end of his wide diocese to the other. The pressure of his hand had polished the wood until it shone. If it were possible to suppose that an angel could prompt anybody to take what was not his own, I should certainly

think that Conon's blessed guardian pointed to that staff. However the thought came, it was acted upon, and more promptly than good inspirations usually were. Conon seized the staff as a memento of the friend whom he believed he was leaving forever, and hurried on. No one interfered with him, but he noticed that heavy black clouds were hanging over the river, and knew that a storm was gathering which soon must burst. However, Conon was not afraid of storms. He grasped his precious staff tightly in one hand and his little bundle in the other, and pushed on. But when he reached the bank of the river he stood still and his heart sank. There, drawn up on the green turf, were the coracles—as many as a dozen at least—but not one of them all was covered with hide. Tightly twisted osier baskets, that is what they were; and Conon knew better than you or I what would happen if he should push off in one of them. But at that moment he heard a shout in the distance, and anything was better than being caught. He seized a coracle, threw it over his shoulder, and ran down to the stream. At

the next instant he was flourishing the rude paddle and floating out as fast as he could. And that was very fast; for the tide was going out, and in spite of all his efforts Conon was being borne down to the sea. But that was not the worst, though it was bad enough. A hundred thin jets of water were springing up like tiny fountains all about him through the twisted osiers; and in a very few moments his coracle would be floating, keel upward, toward the ocean, and he would be at the bottom of the Clyde. For the storm was bursting in wild gusts of wind, the waves were rising, and to swim to shore would be impossible, he knew.

Fright brings people to their senses sometimes. It had that effect upon Conon. A great wave of repentance rushed over his heart, and, falling on his knees in the now rapidly sinking coracle, he implored pardon of God for his sins. And then—he thought of the staff of Saint Ninian. With a quick prayer, he thrust it between the osiers at the bottom of the boat; and even as he did so the water streamed out of the basketwork and

the boat rose and floated on the waves like a cork. Conon still knelt, praying aloud and making many promises of better behavior in future; and behold! instead of going down with the tide, the coracle was being borne quietly to shore. Several monks were on the bank and the bishop among them, for a fisherman had witnessed Conon's departure from the monastery, had recognized him, and told the Brothers that one of their boys had run away. Very much ashamed that boy felt when the coracle touched land and Saint Ninian gravely held out his hand—for his staff. Conon must have been sorry enough to part with it, but as people are not usually allowed to keep stolen goods I suppose he had to give it up. I wish I could tell you whether or not he was punished for his escape; I rather think that he was. Superiors in those days held to a wholesome belief that sins must be atoned for before they can be forgiven. I should like to know what became of Conon afterward. But the old chronicler who tells the story had his mind so full of Saint Ninian that he forgot to take much

interest in any one else. My own belief is the boy went back to class, made many good resolutions, broke them very often and patched them up again, and in the end became a good monk and died in the odor of sanctity. Also I believe that in some way or another he contrived to obtain—and retain—possession of Saint Ninian's staff.

But these are only guesses, so you must not tell them to any one as certain.





The Prayer of Columbus.



HE stood beneath the starlit mid-
night skies
A homeless wanderer. His noble
brow,
Bared to the cool night breeze, upturned to
heaven,
Sad, grave, but hopeful still, the impress bore
Of inborn majesty as certainly
As though he wore earth's proudest diadem;
And from his kindling eye a spirit glanced
That might have ruled the world.

He was alone.

A little sleeping child
Lay near him on the sand. Its dreaming soul,
Far off among the angels; or perchance
Nestling in vision on the mother's breast
Who had gone home before, was not with him,
The wayworn father.

He was very poor,

Had begged that day the infant's sustenance,
And trusted to his God alone for food
Upon the morrow—when he thought of food.
Such thoughts come seldom to a soul like his.

And he was friendless.

In the whole wide world
That night there breathed not one whose
spirit moved
In unison with his. It was an hour
When o'er a heart less nobly formed despair
Had swept in icy waves.—He hoped in God,
And spake such words as these:

“Lady and Queen of heaven!
Deign thou thy servant's trembling feet to
guide
Across the deserts waste and waters wide
Until to see once more my home be given.

“Grant that to my dear land
Be yet again restored her ancient dower
Of glory, honor, wealth, and fame, and power,
Laid at her feet, the gift of this weak hand.

“Set captive Sion free:
 Bid Italy to take the foremost place
 Among the nations: and by God's dear grace
 The cross of Christ to distant peoples be

“Through all the earth made known.
 And first to them who plunged in darkest
 night
 With longing eyes await the dawning light
 Of the fair day that gives to God His own.

“Star of the ocean wild!
 Be thou my guide across the foaming sea!
 To the strange world I seek, oh, lead thou me,
 And through all perils keep me still thy
 child!”

He knelt awhile beneath the silent stars;
 Then stretched himself beside the slumbering
 child
 And slept as he.

And was that prayer rejected? So men deem.
 For Sion still is captive. Nevermore
 Did those worn feet retrace the road that led

To home and Italy. Nay, nevermore
Upon the earth to which he gave a world
Might there be home for him. The land he
loved

And would have set upon the pinnacle
That once was hers, sent forth her noblest son
An outcast from her bosom. Not to her
Came wealth, or power, or glory at his hand,
Or place among the nations.

And the cross?

Aye, that was his. He bore it to the West
And saw the Red Man bow before the sign
Of our redemption—even as he had prayed.
And more was given to him—the cross was
his

To bear upon his heart and in his soul,
His Master's cognizance. We know no more—
God's ways are not as ours.



Legend of Saint Berlinda.



PERHAPS if the age in which we live is distinguished for one offence against the law of God more than another, it is, after luxury and fastidiousness, an almost utter disregard of the Fourth Commandment. Honor and respect for parents are the exception nowadays in families rather than the rule; and for obedience—well, I have been tempted to wonder sometimes whether parents are not expected to practise the virtue toward their children. Certainly they obey them more often than not in many cases; but such obedience can scarcely be called a virtue, I am afraid. Now, if you will take the trouble to read the story of Saint Berlinda, you will learn what was expected of children in the eighth century, when she lived. This same eighth century is counted among the so-called

Dark Ages, I must tell you. They were dark enough in some respects, I daresay. At all events, gas and electricity were wanting to their enlightenment; but they produced a good many saints.

Berlinda was the only living child of Odelard, count of Ornberg. Her mother, Nona, was dead, as was also a brother, and she lived alone with her father, a very holy man who devoted his time and his immense fortune to the practice of all sorts of good works. The young countess loved her father dearly, and imitated his piety as far as she could. She spent her time in working for the church and in attending to the needs of her father's household and to the wants of the poor. It would be difficult to imagine a more blameless life than hers was in every way. We are told by the Holy Ghost that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. His own Son was no exception to this rule; neither was the Blessed Mother; it was natural then that Count Odelard and his daughter should have to bear their share of the cross.

The count was stricken with leprosy, that horrible disease which is and always has been so dreaded that the unfortunates who suffer from it are driven from the society of their fellow men and condemned to dwell apart in loneliness for the rest of their lives. Berlinda's father was not compelled to leave his home, either because those who were in authority were not aware that he had the leprosy; or perhaps because the law enforcing the isolation of lepers had not yet been enacted in Flanders, where he lived. So he remained at Ornberg and was waited upon by his daughter with the most loving care. But it happened one day that Odelard was thirsty, and desired Berlinda to bring him some wine. She brought it in a goblet, and when her father had drunk he desired her also to taste the wine. Now, the leprosy had attacked the face—nay, in all probability, the very lips of the count; and as the girl took the goblet she threw away the drops that remained from her father's draught and washed the cup before refilling it for herself. To us this seems a very simple, and indeed, under the circum-

stances almost the right and natural thing to do. But it was not regarded in that light by Count Odelard. In his eyes the daughter who had declined to drink after her father was guilty of a hideous crime; and there and then he ordered his horses to be harnessed to his chariot, and drove away to the Convent of Meerbeck at Nivelles. At that time St. Gertrude was abbess of Meerbeck, not the Saint Gertrude who was the intimate friend of the Sacred Heart and who gave us that lovely prayer "O Most Beautiful Flower of Mount Carmel," as well as many others; but the sister of Saint Begga who is generally known as Saint Gertrude of Nivelles. There he formally disinherited his daughter and made a gift of all his immense property to the nuns. Now, how do you suppose Berlinda acted under such circumstances? It must be confessed that they were very hard ones, and to be left in absolute poverty for the rest of her life appears to us to have been a punishment terribly severe, considering the nature of the offence. And this was not all. Her father would no longer endure to have her

near him ; and she took refuge in the Convent of Our Lady at Moorsel near Alost. She never excused herself once nor complained to any one of her father's severity ; but looked upon herself as a sinner unworthy of God's mercy, and spent the remainder of her life in doing penance for what she considered her crime.

The convent she had entered was so poor that its revenues could scarce furnish bread and water to the ten religious who dwelt there. It is to be supposed that during his lifetime Odelard paid some small pension toward the support of his daughter, such as it was, and whatever was given her she accepted as a charity sent by the hands of God. She wore the coarse, rough habit of the religious, and under it a hair shirt whose points were both rugged and sharp, and must have caused her much suffering. But she bore all with loving patience and went quietly and uncomplainingly on her way, until one night when the signal was given for Matins she heard the voices of a choir of heavenly spirits who were carrying the soul of her father to

heaven. The next morning Berlinda went to the abbess and told her that she knew for certain that her father was dead. She asked leave to go to the Convent of Meerbeck, where the count was to be buried near his wife and her niece—both of them saints—in order that she might be present at his funeral; and when the permission was obtained she set out at once and arrived just in time to be present at the requiem for the departed soul. Berlinda never returned to the Convent of Saint Marie, because she feared to be a burden on its poverty. She remained at Nivelles, fasting nearly always on black bread and water, except on Sundays and grand feasts, when she took, out of obedience we may be sure, a few vegetables, and sometimes a little fish. She slept upon the bare ground with a stone for her pillow, and in spite of the vision of angels which had informed her of her father's death prayed unceasingly for the repose of his soul. Almighty God did not forget her. One day she found her piece of dry, black bread changed into some delicious fruit; and on a certain Easter Sunday the cold water

disappeared from her cup and was replaced by wine of a most exquisite kind. Our Lord must have dearly loved this sweet little saint who repented so long and so bitterly of what the degenerate Christians of our day would scarcely look upon as a fault. At the end of twelve years He called Berlinda to Himself; and her body was laid near those of her parents and Saint Celsa, who is supposed to have been a near relative. The religious at Meerbeck keep the feast of Saint Berlinda with that of her mother Saint Nona and Saint Celsa on the third of February. I think that all children who are tempted to show want of reverence to their parents should remember her fault and its punishment—and invoke her aid in their efforts to overcome themselves.

Saint Berlinda, pray for us.



The Two Mats.



Far out in the desert the convent
lay ;
And each monk in his lonely
cell

Rose up in the morning to fast and pray,
And to work with his hands as well.

Now, one young monk who was nearly wise
(There be some such even now)
Thought, "A man may get on if he only tries ;
And I fancy I know how.

"Every monk in his cell makes a mat each day,
But supposing I make two !
Methinks at his coming the abbot will say,
'Just see what a will can do.' "

So into his weaving he managed to throw
Such vigor as one man may ;
And had on the abbot's return to show
Two mats for every day.

That we look at ourselves and our works thro'
a glass

Not used by other men
In these days not infrequently comes to pass,
And it sometimes happened then.

So the holy man shook his head and sighed
When he saw the good work done;
"All these for the devil and self," he cried;
"For the love of God not one.

"Alas, that Satan with wiles like these
Men's hearts should be still deceiving;
For the poor in spirit God's kingdom is,
And not for the quick at weaving."

Then he doomed the novice those mats to wear
Like a garment wrapped around him
When the brethren gathered for praise and
prayer;
And there on his knees they found him.

And he humbly cried by the abbot's decree:
"Pray, pray that I be forgiven;
For these little mats have been more to me
Than the glorious kingdom of heaven."

Then back he was sent to his cell once more
Where erst he had wrought so gaily;
And sentenced to add to the common store
Thenceforward, his two mats daily.

We have fallen on more enlightened times
In our age of wisdom's glory;
And can smile as we string on our idle rhymes
This pearl of an Old-World story.

But when this world's follies, and hopes, and
fears,
Are viewed in the light of the other,
What shall we think of the contrite tears,
And the fault of that humble brother?





Saint Opportune's Donkey.

SAINT Opportune was by birth a very great lady, and descended from the old Merovingian kings of France, so everybody supposed that she would marry some grand noble and settle down at the court of Charlemagne, in whose time she lived, for the rest of life. But when she was little more than a child she begged her father so earnestly to allow her to consecrate herself to God that he could not refuse her petition. So she was sent to a Benedictine abbey governed by her aunt whose name was Lantildis. But she did not remain there, for she was a sweet and attractive little maiden—and moreover the abbess's niece—and she thought life would be too easy among the good nuns who loved her so well and perhaps spoiled her a great deal. She went to a little

convent at a place called Montreuil, which was far out in the country, and where she was not as well known as in her aunt's grand abbey; and there she began to lead a life that was very perfect indeed; so much so that all the nuns soon came to look upon her as a model, and tried to imitate her virtues. When the abbess died Opportune was chosen to fill her vacant place, and that is how she came to have anything to do with a donkey.

At no great distance from the abbey stretched a wide forest whence the nuns had a right to bring in firewood for the convent, although the forest belonged not to them, but in all probability to the king. It was guarded by foresters whose duty it was to see that the trees were not cut down or wantonly injured; and to look after the wild animals which abounded in those parts. Opportune was a great saint and prayed much and often. There is a legend which tells that her guardian angel used to stand beside her in the choir and turn over the leaves of her book when she prayed; she had the good habit of reading her prayers from a missal during holy Mass, and missals

in those days were as big as family Bibles are now. They were printed entirely by hand, you know, on vellum, or fine parchment, and were often beautifully illuminated besides. Such missals could not be held in one hand as you may hold yours. They lay on tall stands to which they were sometimes chained to prevent dishonest people from carrying them off. She fasted much, wore a rough hair skirt under her habit, and set her nuns an example of mortification in all things. Oh, yes; the Abbess Opportune was certainly a saint; nobody doubted it. And a very lovable saint too, everybody said. But she was an excellent housewife none the less—perhaps all the more—for her sanctity, and looked after the temporal affairs of her abbey very carefully indeed.

She seems to have been especially good to the cattle and other animals on the farm, and, in particular, made friends with a brisk little donkey who was, no doubt, very fond of her. In those days all ladies wore pockets—nuns, without doubt, carried pretty capacious ones—and we may be sure that an apple, a bit of

salt—sugar was not to be had, for Opportune lived in the Dark Ages, you know—or some other dainty was often hidden in Opportune's for her four-footed friend. Well, it happened one day in summer that as the abbess sat in her cell the econome of the house came to her wearing a look of disturbance and said that Huon, one of the serfs on the farm, had returned from the forest, whither he had been sent to cut faggots, without the donkey which always accompanied him on these wood-cutting expeditions. Would the abbess come down and receive his report? Yes, the abbess would come down immediately. So she descended to a great hall in which she was accustomed to transact the business connected with the farm and lands of the abbey, and there poor Huon, in much tribulation of spirit, told his tale.

He had been sent as usual to the wood, and had just cut and tied two fine faggots and was laying them on the donkey's back, when up came a forester who lived near by, and declaring that neither Huon nor Grigo his ass had any right to be there, seized the

donkey by the bridle and refused to let him go until he should be paid the price of the wood. Huon had no money, and no will to pay if he had; so in spite of the unwillingness of the donkey and the threats and entreaties of the man, poor Grigo was led away. Now, the Abbess Opportune possessed the crowning glory of a meek and gentle spirit, but she saw no good reason for quietly submitting to oppression, and knew moreover that with men of mind like this forester meekness is often mistaken for meanness of soul. In this instance it might do more harm than good—as things excellent in themselves will do sometimes. So she determined to reclaim poor Grigo if she could. It would be of no use to send for the forester, since he would be quite sure not to come, so she resolved to go to him; and set out forthwith.

The forester was walking in a meadow that belonged to him, quite close to his house, and there Opportune found him. She spoke very kindly, but very firmly too, and told him that owing doubtless to some mistake a donkey belonging to the abbey had been seized and

detained while laden with faggots in the forest, and she had come to reclaim her property. The man owned that he had taken Grigo; indeed, the fact admitted of no denial, for the creature stood within sight at the moment and acknowledged the presence of his friend and mistress by a cheerful but tremendous bray which made the forester, who was unaccustomed to Grigo and his ways, jump.

“And when will you send your prisoner back to the abbey?” asked the lady.

“When the whole of the grass in this meadow shall be turned into salt,” was the rude answer, and the forester turned on his heel and walked away. I suppose he thought he had said something very clever—people do mistake insolence for wit sometimes—and he was exceedingly proud of the grass in his beautiful meadow, for it was the finest in all the country round. The abbess said no more, but walked back across the fields to the convent with the Sister who had come with her as companion, and who, although she did not venture to make any remark doubtless thought

that her superior took the matter very quietly indeed. Both the *econome* and Huon were awaiting news of the lost Grigo when the abbess reached the house, and eagerly asked where he was. Opportune answered, "Go in peace, my children; he will be sent back to us to-morrow." And both went joyfully about their business, for what the abbess said would most certainly be done. The forester went about his business joyfully too, thinking what a grand thing it would be all his life through to be able to boast that he had got the better of so great a personage as the abbess of Mont-reuil. In the evening he tied Grigo up in his stable and went off to his own bed; first taking a look at the beautiful meadow which was the joy of his heart, and rubbing his hands as he said: "Ha, ha! my lady abbess, it will be long enough before my grass is turned into salt. You need not hope to see your donkey again." And so he went to bed and to sleep. But what do you think happened next morning?

That forester was awakened very early by loud calls and knocks at his door; and when

he hurried down to learn what could be the matter he found a group of frightened-looking peasants all trying to tell him at the same time that his beautiful meadow, which had been covered only yesterday with the finest crop of grass in the country, had now become a bed of dry, hard salt! Not one word of such a tale would he believe. Salt indeed! Who had ever heard of such a thing? The men must be dreaming. But the men knew better; and invited him to come and see for himself. He ran off as quickly as possible, and could scarce believe the evidence of his own senses when he reached his field. There it lay—the meadow which was a garden of verdure yesterday—with not one blade of grass, not the head of a cowslip, to be seen. From one fence to the other nothing was visible but a dry, white, sparkling bed of salt. Then terror and repentance both seized upon the soul of the forester. He lost not a moment, but returned at once to his home, where he loaded Grigo with faggots and led him, a delighted donkey, to the convent, and asked if he might see the lady abbess at once.

Opportune came, and smiled a little when she saw her donkey and his load. Then the forester fell on his knees and besought her to forgive him and by her prayers to obtain pardon for him from God.

“Go home in peace, my friend, since you have returned the property which does not belong to you,” she said; “but be very careful in future how you possess yourself unjustly of your neighbor’s goods.” The man returned to his field with an anxious heart, and prayed very fervently as he went. I suppose the abbess prayed too; but the mischief was not mended quite as quickly as it had been made. That is the way with mischief nearly always. In no very long time, however, the salt entirely disappeared and the grass was green and flourishing as ever. What was better than that, the forester took the advice of the good abbess and stopped to consider consequences in future when tempted to meddle with his neighbor’s goods.

There was something sad about the death of Opportune. As you know, or have heard, those whom God loves best have to bear a

share of His cross; and that which it pleased Him to lay on the Abbess Opportune was a heavy one. She had a brother named Chrodogrand whom she loved very dearly, for he had always been a true friend to his little sister. It was he who persuaded her parents to allow Opportune to become a religious; and he who received her vows and gave her the veil when she was professed, for Chrodogrand was a bishop as well as a very holy man. But in spite of his holiness he had an enemy who bribed another to murder him; and one day news was brought to Opportune that her beloved brother was lying dead in the street, and moreover that some strange power had rendered his body immovable, so that his people could not lift it or carry it away. The abbess went at once to the spot, and the old legend declares that after saying a prayer on her knees she stooped down and, raising the corpse of the murdered bishop in her arms, carried it without difficulty to the church.

But her heart was broken. The actual assassin was a man whom Chrodogrand had loved and trusted; his own godson moreover,

and the last whom any one could have suspected of perpetrating such a deed. Opportune forgave him and prayed for him; she had not a doubt but that she should see her beloved brother again in heaven; but she never recovered from the terrible blow his death had caused her, and was not long after laid to rest at his side. People used to visit her tomb out of reverence for her virtues, and soon such wonders were brought through her intercession that everybody felt sure she was a saint. In course of time she was canonized and many churches were built in her honor, especially at Paris.

There is a pretty story told of something that happened in one of them. A great many persons were praying before the altar and invoking the intercession of Saint Opportune for the cure of ills either of soul or body, and among them a poor woman who had long been suffering from some painful illness. All at once she knew that she was cured. After returning thanks with all her heart to God and Saint Opportune she left the church, but in the midst of her joy and gratitude she felt

very sad. It had become a custom, originating, no doubt, in the gratitude of those who received graces or favors from Saint Opportune, that her clients should make some offering to the saint; and this poor woman had nothing at all. She was shedding tears over her poverty when she heard the song of a bird, and looking up saw a thrush caroling on the branch of a tree near by. She remembered Saint Opportune's love for all the living things of God's beautiful creation, and exclaimed: "You dear little bird! I wish I could offer you to the saint who has cured me. She would so love to listen to your song. Blessed Opportune, I pray you to bid that little bird come to me that I may place him on your altar where he shall sing to you all day."

And immediately the bird flew down and perched upon her shoulder, continuing to sing joyously all the time. The woman went back into the church, and the people therein wondered much to see the thrush allowing itself to be carried so quietly; so they all gathered round to learn what might be the meaning of

so strange a thing. Then they saw the woman take the little creature, still singing, from her shoulder and place it on the altar, where it seemed well pleased to be. And they all joined the thrush in singing the praises of the good God and His blessed servant Saint Opportune.

Saint Opportune, pray for us.





God's Little One.



WITHIN an ancient convent long
ago
There dwelt a noble maiden who,
for love
Of God's exceeding goodness, and to pray
For them who loved Him not, nor praised
His name,
Left all that worldlings covet; noblest place,
Wealth, love of truest hearts. And at His feet
She laid her wondrous beauty and a gift
Prized far beyond all others—intellect
So keen, so brilliant, that who saw its flash
And felt its power bowed low before the
shrine
That held so fair a soul. She heeded not;
Nor seemed to know how God had gifted her;
But served among the lowliest as though
She were no more than they. So day by day
Increased their reverence for this gracious
one,

And she was held in honor.

In that house
For many years—so many that but few
Remembered when she came there first—had
lived

Another. When she sought their door the
nuns

Of that now far-off time had pitied her
For she was poor and simple; and her speech
Stumbling and rude as of an untaught child.
Vainly they strove to soften her, and form
Her uncouth manners to more gentle mould.
Either she could not or she would not learn.
But when they told her, gently as they might,
That in their convent was no place for her
She wept, entreating, till their hearts were
moved;

And she remained because they pitied her.
Now when Benita (so they fondly named
The highly gifted maiden whom God called
To cast her lot with theirs) came to the house
Simpliciana had grown very old,
Bowed down, and feeble. Fair she had not
been—

Age brought deformity. The little wit

That once was hers had left her as it seemed.
Her eye was dull, her voice in mumbling
speech

Quavered discordant; even the very prayers
That with much labor in the bygone years
She learned to say were all forgotten now.
Half pitying, half contemptuous, they had
changed

Her name to Piccola; which, when she heard
For the first time she laughed and wagged
her head,

And mumbled, "Piccola! God's little one!
'Tis well; 'tis very well."

Benita came,
By God so richly dowered; and Piccola,
Who heard the praises lavished on the soul
That had left much for Him, and revered
her,

Strove ever to be near her; rendering her
All loving service—with such awkwardness
As marred the good intent. And the kind
soul,

Benita, prayed for patience, thinking still
"God bears with this poor creature; why
not I?"

The years rolled on. Benita prayed and
wrought,
Winning high praise from all; and Piccola
Stumbled and groped unnoticed on her way,
Save when some one among the sisterhood
Lost patience and rebuked her, when she
smiled
In foolish fashion, muttering to herself,
“Aye, aye; ’tis well. God’s little one.”
Then did Benita, pitying, pray for her,
Thanking high heaven that *she* was—what
she was.

One night Benita slept, and in a dream
She stood beside the judgment-seat of Christ.
Mary was there and wore her sweetest smile
Of loving expectation. Lucifer,
With scowl malignant, cowered behind the
throne;
And all about their glorious Queen were
grouped
The radiant angels who, with fluttering wings
And hands outstretched in welcome, stood to
greet
Some ransomed child of God. Benita’s soul

Was rapt in ecstasy. Oh, what were now
The trials she had known, the gifts of earth,
To such an end as this? When will He turn—
The Lord she loves—His gracious smile on her?
When will He say, "O My beloved, come!
Thy life of toil is over!" Ah, not yet.

Another soul approaches. At His feet,
O'erwhelmed by His transcendent loveliness,
Lies prostrate—Piccola! His pierced hands
Rest for an instant on the aged head
In benediction. Then He raises her,
And turning to His Mother softly speaks:
"O Queen, receive and crown her. She is
Mine,

For she hath been on earth a little one.
For such God's heaven was made."

Benita rose
And flew to find her sister. She too slept—
The last long sleep that wakes to earth no
more.

The withered face was strangely beautiful;
On the worn forehead smiled the peace of
God.

Then prostrate on the ground Benita wept,
Crying, "Make me, O God, a little one."



Legend of the Mimulus.



WHEN 'neath the agéd olive-trees
My Lord lay prostrate on the
ground
And bore His awful agony,
Men say my blossoms grew around.
And when from out His sacred pores
The crimson drops of anguish rolled,
Drawn by the crimes of sinful men,
They fell upon my robe of gold.

Since that dread hour, as earth's vain
sons
Their princes' favors proudly wear,
These tokens of earth's sinless One
Do I upon my petals bear.
And simple souls who love to trace
The memory of their Lord in me
Have blessed me for those crimson stains,
And called my name Gethsemane.



The Legend of the Christmas Rose.



ARE there any Christmas roses in America? I do not mean those beautiful roses which are cultivated with so much care in all the greenhouses that abound in the land, and which we can now obtain as readily when we wish to decorate the altar for Midnight Mass or to grace the Blessed Mother's festival of the Assumption; but a starlike flower (I think that learned people call it winter aconite) which grows close to the ground on a short, thick stem, sometimes under the snow, and blossoms only at Christmas-time. I have not seen it here, but the children love it dearly in those places where it grows and try to have it in their gardens, partly because it comes when no other flower is to be found; and still more because they connect its blooming with the coming of "Dear Mary's Little Flower," the sweet Babe of Bethlehem.

It is about this flower that I am now going to tell you a story, and I hope you will like it as much as I did when I first read it many, many years ago.

Once upon a time there dwelt on the borders of a wide forest a poor widow and her only child. The widow was poor in the most literal sense of the word, and not only so poor that she could not afford to take a trip every summer, or send to New York for her winter bonnets and gloves. Her last new bonnet was so old that nobody remembered seeing her wear any other, and she never had any gloves at all. Whenever she could get any one to employ her she went to the houses or into the fields of her neighbors to work, and when work was not to be had she made her way into the forest to pick up the sticks which were all she had to depend upon for fuel when the bitter frost and snow came on. Her little boy was accustomed to remain alone while his mother was away, and although he must sometimes have longed for a playmate, in the bright summer weather, he managed well enough. Then the flowers

and the birds were his playmates, and he knew how to talk to the sunshine and the breeze.

I never heard that they answered him in his language, but doubtless they spoke to him in their own; and since he had lived always in the forest which was their home, he had learned to understand after his fashion what they said; and it was a fashion with which he was very well content. His mother left him with a piece of bread for dinner and sometimes even an apple or some plums which had been given her by her good neighbors for the child; and he was quite satisfied with this hard fare. When she returned she took him on her knee and sang hymns, or told him stories—generally about the saints who toiled and struggled on earth and so won a glorious crown of everlasting happiness in heaven. But that which he loved best was the story of the holy child Jesus, who came from His bright home above the blue sky, where the stars are scattered like golden blossoms in His pathway, and led a life of suffering and privation on earth in order that we may learn

from His example and for His sake to bear pain. The child was so very small that he could not understand it all—which of us can? But he dearly loved the story in spite of that, and begged his mother so often to repeat it that she thought he must surely know it by heart.

All this happened in the summer. It was a different thing in winter, when the sun rose late in the morning and went to bed early at night. The poor little sticks that the widow gathered in the forest burned out very quickly, and had to be used as carefully as though they had been something very precious indeed. The sky was grey, and the frost bit the child's toes and fingers; and he could scarcely ever go out to play in the snow, because his clothing was so thin and there was no fire to warm him when he came in. And hardest of all, his mother could not sit up to tell him stories any more because it was so cold. He was too young to remember the last winter, and thought that summer would never come again. But one day when he was crying his mother, who happened to be there,

lifted him to her knee, and told him of the country beyond the sky where the sun shines always and the flowers never fade. The boy listened and was comforted, for the good God has given that power to the words and love of a mother that they can always soothe and console. The child slept sweetly that night, and murmured in his slumbers of the fair summer land of which his mother had told him, and smiled with happiness like the angels; and as she watched him she forgot cold and poverty and was happy too. She seldom felt lonely, because of the love she felt for her little one; and you know she did not care to play as he did. As for talking, she had lived so long alone that she had learned to speak with God, and they who know how to do that become in the course of time careless of all other speech.

That was a hard winter for everybody—worst of all for the poor. The village folk who gave employment to the widow were almost as poor as herself, and could pay her for her labor only in such food as they had. They could give her no money wherewith to

purchase warm clothing and fuel for herself and her child. And she never begged or complained. So, as the winter went on and the weather grew colder the boy suffered more and more each day. And he was so lonely. He crept out to the edge of the forest when his mother had left him, and peeped among the trunks of the trees to see if perhaps his old friends the hares and rabbits would peep back at him; but they had crept into their warm winter houses and never came. Very early in the mornings and on bright moonlight nights I suppose the rabbits came out and scampered over the snow, for they seem to like a game as much as children do, but then the child was in bed and did not see them. Besides, they scampered over the open fields half a mile away from his home.

But the boy longed most of all for the sunshine and the flowers. Now, matters grew at last to be so bad that a morning came when the poor mother had nothing to give the child but a dry crust and a drink of water before she left home. The poor are very patient, and he did not grumble nor cry; but in her heart

the mother was weeping, as she kissed the little face that was so pale and pinched, and promised that she would get some food in the village from a kind lady who lived there, and return as she could. Then she went away. The child ate his crust and then went out into the winter sunshine, which was very bright and clear that day. He sat on the ground in the porch of the little cottage and thought of the beautiful land of which his mother had told him, where the flowers never fade, where the sun shines always, and where hunger never comes. And he cried sadly out of the loneliness of his little heart:

“Oh, when will the sun shine, and the flowers come again? I wish that the holy child Jesus would come and take me to the land where the roses grow always; so should I never be hungry or cold.”

“Wherefore art thou weeping?” said a sweet voice at his side; “is there aught I can do to comfort thy sorrow?” and looking up, he saw with astonishment, for never before had any but his mother come to the cottage save in the evenings when the work was

finished for the day, the boy beheld another child standing beside him, clad in a white garment that glistened like sunshine and bearing in his hand a bunch of flowers.

"I am weary and lonely," said the child of the widow; "and it is very cold. I beseech thee, stay here and play with me."

"I will stay with thee willingly," answered the other child, seating himself on the floor beside his companion; "and now, at what wilt thou play?"

"Canst thou tell stories, as my mother does, and knowest thou about the land of the holy child Jesus, where the sun shines always, and the roses and lilies never fade?"

"I know that land well," said the gentle visitor; "and I will tell thee as many stories as thou wilt. And as for the flowers, lo! I have brought thee some," and he gave him those which he carried in his hand. "They will fade here, for this is not their birth-place. But thou mayest keep and play with them to-day."

So the children sat together, and the guest told wondrous stories of the land whence he

came, until the other child forgot his weariness and was sad and lonely no more.

The bright child kissed his companion when he left him, and promised to come often to play with him. Soon after the widow came home. She brought food as she had promised, and as the boy took his meal on her knee he told her of the child who had come to him and had promised often to return. He looked for the flowers, but they had withered and all their radiant colors had faded away. The mother thought that her boy had slept in his hunger and dreamed of the stories which he so much loved to hear. So she smiled and kissed him and bade him keep his visitor to see her the next time he came. After that day he came often, and although he brought no more flowers the child did not miss them as he listened to the stories told by his new friend.

But one day the guest said to his companion: "Thou art sad, and but now thou wert weeping. What hath grieved or wounded thee to-day?" And the child answered: "I long so much to see the land of which thou

tellest, where all are as happy as thou art, and my mother would sorrow no more. And I want to see the sun shine and the flowers bloom. I would that thou wouldst take me home with thee to-day." But the other said: "Not to-day; for thy mother would grieve for thee shouldst thou leave her without bidding her farewell. And without thee, think how lonely she would be."

"I can not go without my mother," said the child; "but in thy home is there not place for us both?"

"There is, indeed, place for you and many more," replied the visitor; "but the time to go is not yet. But since thou so longest for flowers, come and I will show thee where to find some. Perchance their sweetness may comfort thee when I am gone."

Then he took the hand of the little one and led him to a corner of the widow's tiny garden, where the withered plants were all hidden by the snow. And with his little hand he swept away the soft covering from some green leaves which grew there and which the forest child had never seen before. In the

midst of the green leaves was a pure white blossom shaped like a star, and beside it a half opened flower and a bud. The child clapped his hands and exclaimed with delight to think that in his own little garden the sweetest flowers were blooming in winter-time, and even under the snow. The other child gathered them all.

“These are Christmas roses,” he said; “they blossom when all other flowers are sleeping, to remind men of me. By some who love me they are called Stars of Bethlehem, but they are roses to you. They will not wither as soon as the flowers that come from my own country, for their home is on earth. Show them to your mother when she comes this evening, and tell her I shall come here no more. Nay, do not weep,” for the widow’s son was stricken with grief at the words of his companion, and tears began to flow; “I leave these flowers with thee. When this which is half opened shall be full blown I will come for thee and thou shalt go with me to my Father’s kingdom. There shalt thou know cold and hunger no more.”

But the child wept more bitterly than ever when he heard this.

"Thou knowest," he said, "that when thou first camest hither I would gladly have followed thee, but didst thou not thyself teach me that I should not leave my mother alone? Therefore if thou wilt not take her also to thy glorious home then must I remain with her here."

Then answered the other: "Truly did I teach thee even as thou sayest; and as I taught thee thou shalt do. But see this bud which is folded so much more closely than thine. This is for thy mother. When its leaves unfold to the light she also shall come to me, and thou shalt be the first to greet her in thy new home. Art thou satisfied now?" So the child said he was satisfied, and the other kissed him softly on his forehead and went away. When the mother came home in the evening the boy told her all the story of the Christmas roses, and she smiled as he told her, and said that she had seen such roses before. And she told the child that she knew where to find those flowers in the garden, for

that they had been planted there for her long since by one who loved her and had gone home to God. And she wept as she told him. But not for that did the child lose faith in his friend.

The days passed slowly after that, for the child from the summer country came there no more, but the boy did not pine. "He will come to me when my rose opens," he said to his mother, and she smiled and turned away. There was warmth now in the cottage, for God had sent the knowledge of the widow's poverty to the heart of one of His friends, and for love of Him that friend sent her food and fuel and all things that were needful for her and her boy. When the eve of Christmas came she told the child all the story of the Babe of Bethlehem, and of the angels and the shepherds and the kings. And when she had ended, and was putting him to bed, he said suddenly: "Oh, mother, do you think that my rose will bloom to-morrow? Will not my beautiful child come to me then?" But she answered quickly: "Nay, my son; for my bud is not unfolded, and I can not spare thee until

I also am ready to go." So she kissed him and laid him to rest.

And early in the morning she awoke before day-break and found that a strange sweet perfume was floating through the house. And by the dim light of the lamp she had left burning by the child's bed, because it was Christmas, she saw that his rose, which stood in a tiny glass on the table, had unfolded its leaves. Then she sprang to his side and covered with kisses the sweet lips that were smiling as she had never seen them smile before, and sank upon her knees with a low cry beside the bed. For those rosy lips were cold as marble, and she knew that the visitor from the land where the flowers bloom always had come to fetch her boy. She knew that he was happy, but she had lost him and her heart was desolate. A mother's love is very strong. So she stretched her hands toward the heaven where he was, and cried aloud in her anguish: "O merciful God, who hast taken my child in Thy love, I ask Thee not to restore him again; but take me also in Thy mercy, I beseech Thee. Leave me not alone

on this desolate earth.” And even as she uttered her prayer the third flower burst open its petals, and a strain of heavenly music floated through the room.

A soft light like the golden gleam of morning filled the poor cottage, and the widow saw a glorious sight in her home. Hand in hand above the bed, their feet resting on a rosy cloud, came the two children who so lately had played together in that room. Her own boy stretched his hands toward her and cried in accents sweeter and more musical than even she had ever heard from him before: “See, my mother, thy rose is blooming. The angels wait for thee above. Come with us to the Land of Summer, where thou canst weep and suffer no more.” And that other Child bent over her and said softly: “My Mother waits for thee. Come.” And she bowed her head in adoration, for she knew then that it was the holy child Jesus who spoke.

The village folk missed the widow from her place in church at the Christmas Mass that day and they wondered, for never had

she been absent before. And later on they went to seek her in her cottage, fearing lest perhaps some accident had befallen her or her boy. They found the cottage filled with a wondrous fragrance which seemed to come from three full-blown roses in a small glass by the child's bed. And they saw the mother kneeling by her dead boy with a smile of heavenly beauty on her upturned face. Then they knew that she had gone to keep Christmas in the Land of Summer and would never kneel to worship with them in this world again; and they blessed God for her in their hearts.

And now you know the legend of the Christmas rose.





• Saint Nottburga.

A GHOST-STORY OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

SOMEBODY tells me that you want some ghost-stories! Am I to believe such a thing, children? And, what is more to the purpose, am I to tell some for your edification? I must tell them on hearsay, for I assure you that not only have I never seen a ghost, but I sincerely hope I never may. Moreover, I expect never to be disappointed in that hope.

Do you suppose you will ever encounter a visitor from the other world? It is not long since I said to a little girl, who petitioned for "just one ghost-story": "But, Mary, do you believe in ghosts?" The answer was prompt: "Oh, no; I really and truly do not, but I love ghost-stories." "But if you do not believe in their existence, what do you mean when you make the sign of the cross and say the Apostles' Creed? Perhaps you think that

Mary was nonplussed? Not at all. She replied very coldly: "Oh, those are spirits, not ghosts. At least not the kind to tell tales about." The distinction between spirits and ghosts must be a very nice one—too fine for my comprehension; but, then, children understand so many things. Well, I once found a ghost-story in the life of a saint, and, if you must have one, perhaps that will be better than another; so here it is for you.

Once upon a time, which means in the present instance in the thirteenth century, there lived in the Tyrol a noble knight, called the count or baron, I am not sure which, of Rottenberg. He was young, handsome, wealthy, and brave; and lived in the castle of Rottenberg, with many vassals and serfs. His father was no longer living and his mother was attached to the household of Berchtold, duke of Carinthia, of whose daughters I have a story that I must tell you some day. Now there lived in this same castle a good and pious maiden of whom perhaps you may have heard, for she was afterward known as Saint Nottburga. Her parents were vassals, in all

probability serfs, of the lords of Rottenberg, and Nottburga served the young count as cook. Her virtue was well known, and she was trusted so entirely that she had full permission to do as she thought best in all small matters, and many of her lord's household goods were entrusted to her care. There were poor persons in that country then as probably there are now, some of them in all likelihood pilgrims going to and from the holy places in Palestine, and they often came to the castle for relief. Nottburga had many virtues; and among them charity toward her neighbor generally, shown particularly in an especial love for God's poor, was the one she cherished most. You may suppose, then, that she was always happy when she had an opportunity of relieving their wants.

Now it happened that the lord of Rottenberg wooed and won a fair and noble lady for his wife whom many of the neighboring barons had wished to wed. She was rich in this world's goods, but, as too often is the case, desired much more; and the new lady of Rottenberg was never so happy as when

saving, or contriving something that might add to her store. Her heart was so full of the love of earthly possessions that there was in it no room for the love of God's poor. She had heard of her husband's faithful servant, Nottburga, and was prepared to value her very highly, for she set great store on any handmaid who helped her to save her substance, and she thought that Nottburga would do this. When the lady of Rottenberg discovered that her servant thought quite as much of helping the poor as of caring for the goods committed to her charge, she conceived a dislike for her which was both foolish and unjust. Foolish, because a servant who is faithful to the divine precepts will be quite certain to be faithful to her earthly master; and unjust, because, although Nottburga was generous and gave freely what she had in charge when she knew she had her lord's permission to do so, she was strictly honest, and would not, on any consideration, have cheated any one, or deprived him of what was fairly his due.

But these considerations weighed nothing

at all with the Lady Ottilia. She chid Nottburga harshly for her charity, and forbade her to give anything to the poor again. Very sorely was the good maiden grieved at receiving this command, and she secretly applied to the baron for permission to distribute at least the broken food, of which much remained daily in the large household, to those who came to his gate for alms. This permission he right gladly gave, for the lord of Rottenberg was no miser, but rather full of love and pity for all in distress, albeit somewhat in awe of his wife. So every day Nottburga carefully collected all that was left from the table even to the smallest scraps and distributed the same, often shedding tears as she did so, for grief that her alms must be so small. Whatever she could spare from her own small store she added gladly to the broken food, and in this way many of the poor were relieved. But it came to the ears of the Lady Ottilia that the broken scraps were given away, and she bade her lord question Nottburga and chide her severely if he found this report to be true.

Now, although he had little love for this errand, he dared not leave it undone—and yet in tented field or in the chase there was no braver knight than he. He waited for his faithful servant at the foot of a flight of steps that led from the door of the castle to the gate, whereat the poor folk were accustomed to stand at the hour of noon, and presently Nottburga came. She felt no fear of her good master, for she knew that his heart was noble, and that of himself he begrudged not what the poor needed from his store. But when she came near him he spoke to her with anger, and demanded wherefore she disobeyed the noble lady his wife. Nottburga answered humbly that she had indeed no intention of disobeying, and would endeavor in future to avoid giving offence. And with that she would fain have passed on, holding in her hand the corners of her apron wherein the broken meat was contained. But this her master would not permit, for he was ashamed of the work he had undertaken, and wrathful with himself and his wife. So he said rudely that Nottburga was deceiving him and his

lady, and that he would see what of his goods she was stealing for the poor.

Nottburga was more grieved than ever at this conduct on the part of one who had always been till then her good lord; and begged him to allow her to pass on, for that which she carried was indeed rightly her own; and this was the truth, for she held in her apron only the dinner which she had left untasted and the scraps which he himself had given her permission to take. He would not be satisfied with her gentle words, but struck her apron roughly with his hand, so that it fell to the ground and all its contents were strewed upon the steps. And he beheld a wonder then. The broken crusts and all the fragments which Nottburga had carried had been changed into chips of firewood by the power of the God who loves the poor. The Lord of Rottenberg was grievously ashamed, and from that time honored with all his heart the faithful servant whose virtues he knew must bring a blessing on his house. But the Lady Ottilia hated her more than ever, and persecuted her so cruelly that life would have become a burden to Nott-

burga had she not borne her sufferings joyfully for the love of God.

Then came a terrible time when both plague and famine devastated the land. Then the heart of Nottburga was sore almost to breaking, she could do so little to relieve the sufferings of the poor. She could obtain nothing for them except the scraps from the kitchen and what she saved from her own meals; and at last she was forbidden to give even these. One day the Lady Ottilia sent for her servant and harshly forbade her to give away anything at all. Then Nottburga, in tears, asked what should be done with the fragments she had been accustomed to distribute, for little was left in that household now, and none of the servants would eat the bits that she had.

“And if the servants will not eat of them,” said the Lady Ottilia, “have we not to feed the swine? Bid the swineherd come at noon each day to the castle, and see that the fragments be faithfully given to him henceforth.” So from that day forward the fragments were given to the swine on the farm and the poor

were sent empty away. Now, although Nottburga sorrowed in secret over this sad state of things and grieved most of all for the punishment which she knew God in His anger would some day send upon her master's house, her heart was true and loyal, and to no mortal ear did she breathe the cause of the trouble that filled her soul; but the story got abroad, as such tales will, though it is hard to learn how they are known. The people whispered when the Lady Ottilia appeared among them that she was the Christian who starved the poor that her swine might be filled. She heard these whisperings, and in her rage blamed Nottburga as the one by whom she had been defamed. Then the lord of Rottenberg, in anguish of spirit, sent notice to his servant that her life was in danger and she must fly. So in the night Nottburga left the home in which she had dwelt from childhood, and after saying farewell to her parents who lived in the village belonging to the castle, she went forth alone.

Many tales are told of her flight and how she took service with a farmer who was a

hard and godless man, and who would not allow her time for her prayers even on Sunday, but insisted on making her labor in the fields on that day. But Nottburga loved God above all things, and never broke His holy law. At last so many wonderful things were done by the saint and so many marvels wrought in her regard, that her hard master learned to reverence her very much, and would have done anything rather than have suffered her to leave his service. She was willing enough to remain with him while it was the will of God that she should do so, and the time passed quickly, for she was always busy. She worked in the fields in the summer, and in the autumn reaped the corn and helped with the vintage. In spring and winter she spun wool into fine thread, or made the garments which were worn in her master's house. Then she was always ready to help the poor and suffering; and all the little children loved Nottburga, as you may be quite sure she loved them. There was no lack of employment for her. So the years went by.

At first when the Lady Ottilia had called for Nottburga and was told that she had gone she was very angry indeed; partly because a serf of hers should have dared to leave her service without her leave, partly because she had wished to punish her for the evil reports she had heard, and still more because the lady of Rottenberg knew very well that it would be long before she could get one to serve her so faithfully and well. But time passed on, and Nottburga was forgotten in her old home. I suppose that her parents knew where she had concealed herself, but of this I am not sure. It may be that five years had passed when a terrible scourge visited all that part of the country and raged fiercely at Rottenberg, as elsewhere. A frightful disease called the plague appeared in Bavaria and the Tyrol, and the people, who dreaded its ravages more than anything, became demoralized by fear. Parents ran away from their homes when their children were stricken, and I am afraid that the children deserted their dying parents sometimes. The good monks did what they could to alle-

viate the misery that everywhere prevailed, and rich people gave away a great deal of gold and food in alms, perhaps in the hope that in this way they might avert the anger of God from their own homes. But the plague attacked both rich and poor and among others laid prostrate the proud lady of Rotenberg.

Then she reaped the fruits of her hardness of heart and want of charity toward the poor. Her husband was away at court and his mother was at Andechs, where the Duke of Carinthia lived. There was no one to help the miserable woman, and in her despair she remembered Nottburga. How she discovered where the holy maiden was living I can not tell you, but she contrived to send word to her of the state in which she lay, and the faithful servant at once responded to her call. It was nothing to Nottburga that the sufferer had once been her persecutor—that she had been compelled to flee from her at the risk of her life.

She saw in her plague-stricken mistress only one of the poor whom she loved so

dearly, and hastened to her side at once. Tenderly and lovingly Nottburga nursed the woman who had been her bitter and relentless foe; and her charity was rewarded, not only by the recovery of the Lady Ottilia, but also, and this Nottburga valued far more, by her conversion to a better life. I am afraid that she did not pass at once from having been thoroughly avaricious and a slave to the perishing goods of earth to a state like Nottburga's own; but she replaced her faithful servant in her former position of trust and gave her full permission to relieve the poor and suffering whom Nottburga loved so well. Her heart softened more and more as time went on, and she repented as well as she knew how of her evil deeds. She died after a few years spent in the service of God, although we do not hear that she was exactly in the odor of sanctity. After his wife's death the lord of Rottenberg spent his time chiefly at court or on the battle-field, for those were troublous times; and Nottburga remained at the castle, where she acted as housekeeper, as we should say now, and thus

had full power to minister to the needs of all who sought for help at her hands.

I must tell you that the castle of Rottenberg was a strongly fortified building of stone which had been erected with donjon-keep, watch-towers, and courts at a time when men had to hold their possessions against their warlike and often very predatory neighbors by force of arms. In course of time many additions had been made to the original edifice, and there were passages and corridors which had to be visited at night during the lord's absence to make sure that no evil-disposed person lurked within the walls. It was the custom in those times for the whole family to meet together in the evening in the great hall of the castle, and there the women sat at one end, spinning and chatting or telling tales, while the men-at-arms and male servants gathered round a huge fire at the other, mending their arrows, shaping bows, or perhaps dozing, for they must often have been very tired after the day's work. From time to time the men whose duty it was to see to the safety of the house and its inmates would

rise and make their rounds, which might in no wise be neglected on any account.

After a while Nottburga noticed that the warders and guards showed a certain unwillingness to pass alone through the corridors that ran round the castle between the inner portion of the house and the courtyard. They tried to make the rounds in companies of twos or threes, and even then returned with pale faces and trembling limbs as though they had encountered something frightful without. Then rumors began to float about of an awful appearance that made itself seen in the evening in the corridors; the men-at-arms declared they could not encounter it again, and for a time the captain of the guard had a hard life in keeping his men to their duty. The women caught the infection; they would not leave the great hall after nightfall alone. It was all in vain to laugh at their terror, and it was not to be scolded away. A terrible apparition had taken up its abode in the passages and no one could enter them at night without meeting the thing. Nobody could tell who it was, but all shook their heads and

looked wise when any one crossed himself and told of what he had seen. And what *had* they seen?

This was the story as it was repeated by the men-at-arms. When they were walking round the castle with their lanterns, or in the dim twilight of the autumn evenings, they first heard a moaning so piteous and yet so terrible in its wailing sound that their hearts were melted with compassion and their souls were wrung—they were not ashamed to confess it—with fear. It was a moaning such as was never uttered by mortal man or beast in pain. The sound came ever nearer and nearer and none who had once heard it might hope to escape, strove he never so wildly, for if he turned to fly it was before him and confronted him withersoever he might go. And then, straight before him, he must look upon a sight which all who encountered it devoutly prayed he might never be called to look upon again. A huge sow, so lean and gaunt that her bones seemed to be coming through the skin that barely covered them, approached, and gazed with such eyes of pleading, human agony into

the beholder's face that his blood froze in his veins, and he grew cold and pale with horror, how brave soever he might be. The creature was seven feet long at least, and starving—so they all agreed. The hunger in its face and eyes was terrible, and its cries were like those of a lost soul. And now one and all were determined to meet the creature no more. The men were ready to encounter the enemy on the battle-field, or robbers, should need be, at home. They one and all understood such foes as these. But this horrible visitant they did not understand, and into the haunted corridors they would not go.

The captain of the guard rated his subordinates soundly for a set of cowards, as in truth he held them to be, and declared that he himself would make the rounds of the castle on that evening, and then woe to man or beast that should come within range of his good bow. A cloth-yard arrow should settle the question once for all. And he meant what he said. When evening came the captain set forth boldly, weapon in hand, with full determination to put an end to the visits of the

intruder who had so sorely disturbed the peace of the house. He would have no companion, although several of his comrades were ready enough to go with him if he would. They had proved themselves to be no better than women, he said, where this strange creature was concerned, and would but weaken his courage and disturb his aim. He would set forth alone, but they might come forth presently and help him drag in the carcass of the beast when she was slain. So he left them in the hall, and they waited anxiously and somewhat impatiently for his return. He was a long time away; and when at last he came back he did not laugh at his comrades or called them cowards any more. His face was pale as the face of a corpse, and for long he refused to say what he had seen. But he told the story at length. He had heard the moaning and wailing and had confronted the creature with bow drawn, although the wild, appealing look in her eyes had well-nigh made him relent. He sent the shaft with good aim and true—he saw it enter the body of the animal and heard the long, unearthly shriek

she uttered when the wound was received—but instead of falling, as any living beast or mortal must have done in like case, the sow turned away and went on rooting among the stones of the pavement for the food she could never find. He had seen his arrow fall harmlessly from her side, and then the creature turned and looked at him reproachfully as only a human being could have done—and the strong man who had laughed at his comrades a short hour before fled affrighted from the corridor; and now he vowed like the others that he would never set foot in the haunted passages again.

So from that forth the corridors were deserted after nightfall, and both men and women trembled as they passed even the doors that led into them, and averted their eyes. But they were not to escape in that way from the object of their fear. Although the terrible animal was no longer seen by the inmates of the castle, its wailings and moans were heard night after night, and the sound penetrated to the hall and froze with horror the souls of the domestics who were too much

frightened even to pray. Then it happened by the good providence of God that a holy priest came by that way and rested at the castle of Rottenberg; and they told him the story of their trouble and how peace had forsaken the house which was surely haunted by some evil thing. A lost soul wandered nightly in the corridors so that no man might enter there, and its cries and moans were such as none could bear to hear. Then the priest said that it was scarce likely to be a lost one; but that if indeed they were not mistaken and led into error by the terror that had seized upon their souls, if one in punishment in good truth wandered through the corridors, then in all probability it must be some soul condemned to atone in purgatory for sins committed while on earth who had been permitted to return to beg for prayers. Now, when he said this they were more troubled than ever, for surely in such a case it would be a duty of Christian charity to question that poor soul and learn what might be done for its relief; and this' no man among them all was by any means inclined to do. So while they

held counsel among themselves and none knew what to say, since no one dared to undertake the thing for himself and no one liked to propose it to his neighbor, that holy man of God offered to go into the haunted place with lights and holy water and to ask the creature wherefore it had now for many days troubled and disturbed the peace of the house; and he said that he feared not to go alone in the name of the Lord but that any might go with him who would. Then, moved by curiosity for the most part, and feeling not much terror in his company, nearly all of them agreed to go. But Nottburga accompanied the priest not because she was desirous of seeing a spirit from the other world, but because she thought it shame to them of the household to let a stranger undertake this thing alone.

The good priest said holy Mass in the chapel the next morning, and they prayed much by his advice in the castle of Rottenberg that day. And when evening came and the awful wailing began to sound through the house, the priest summoned all who wished

to see this thing to the end, and together in procession, carrying holy water and blessed candles, in great numbers they went into the corridor. When as yet they saw nothing but the old grey walls and the long streaks of moonlight that streamed in through the loop-holes above, the priest raised his voice and summoned the spirit that troubled the Christians of that household to appear. They all heard a rushing sound and the patter of feet upon the worn pavement, and then the creature came and stood before the holy man, looking straight into his face with human reason in its eyes.

“In the name of the most high God,” said the priest, “I demand of thee, unquiet spirit, wherefore thou comest hither to disturb this Christian household and prevent those who dwell here from living in peace?” And the creature made answer in tones that many there remembered well:

“I am Ottilia, once lady of this castle, who died here not many years ago, and I am doomed to wander through these corridors suffering the pangs of starvation, until certain

Masses shall be said for the repose of my soul, and until Nottburga of her charity, by her prayers, shall obtain my release. And this in punishment for my greed and hardness of heart in preferring the swine to God's poor."

And, with an awful wail that pierced their souls, she disappeared. So priest and people knelt together in the corridor and entreated the mercy of God on the soul of the Lady Ottilia, and they spent the whole of that night in fervent prayer. Many Masses were said and countless prayers arose to heaven, for the whole matter was laid before the lord of Rottenberg and he spared nothing to obtain the intercession of all holy men, and nuns, and of the poor. Nottburga determined to devote her life while God should spare her to praying for that poor soul. And it came to pass that the wailing sounds grew, after a time, fainter and less heartrending, but it was long before they wholly ceased. Indeed there was one version of the tale which says that it was not until the day of Nottburga's death that the visitation ceased at Rottenberg, but that after that day the sounds of weeping and

wailing were heard in the corridors no more. Saint Nottburga is still honored in some parts of Germany, and most of all in her old home in the Tyrol.

“So, my masters all, be sure,
Wealth and power possessing,
Ye who now shall bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.”





The Seasons.



KNEW that I was called the
cross to bear,
And sad and weary down to rest
I lay;

The earth was all so bright, so wondrous
fair—

Why should I cast her proffered gifts away?

At length I slept, and on a starry throne
I saw Our Lady with the holy Child;
My gentle Mother called me to her side,
While Jesus bade me stay and sweetly smiled.

And then I heard arise from angel choirs
Sweet hymns to Jesus' and to Mary's name,
While laden with fair gifts of fruit and
flowers

To greet their infant King the Seasons came.

The first was Springtide; all her sunny hair
Sparkled with rain-drops, as at Jesus' feet
She laid her gift, a wreath of early leaves
Twined with pale snowdrops and the violet
sweet.

Then Jesus raised it, and, "Henceforth," He
said;
"Thy brightest blossoms, Spring, shall Mary
claim;
And while earth's children love their Virgin
Queen,
Thy fairest month shall bear her blessed name."

Next, Summer came to worship, and she bore
Treasures to Jesus from earth's brightest
bowers;
Lilies and roses in the wreath she wore
Were mingled with His own sad Passion-
flowers.

And Jesus blessed those flowers: "Evermore
Around My altar-throne your place shall be;
Where angels bright their hidden God adore,
Fair flowers," He said, "ye shall abide with
Me."

Thy wreath of thorns shall crown the God of
heaven;
Thy cross of wood afford Him sweetest rest."

"And is it thus, dear Lord? and dost Thou
choose
For love of thankless man a lot like this;
Earth's fairest, brightest gifts dost Thou
refuse
That Thou mayst gain for me eternal bliss?

"And shall I choose the flowers? Dearest
Lord!
Thou hast rejected them for love of me;
Then let it be my hope, my sweet reward,
To wear the thorns and bear the cross with
Thee."





The Legend of Saint Barbara.

LONG, long ago, as far back indeed as when the wicked tyrant Maximilian was doing his best, or his worst, to make desolate the Church of God, there lived in the Roman province of Nicomedia a powerful and wealthy nobleman named Dioscorus. He was a pagan and either from interest or some other motive appeared to be devoted to the service of the false gods. Into the home and heart of Dioscorus the true God of whom he knew nothing had sent a blessing worth a thousand times more than his riches and power, in the shape of a little daughter named Barbara, and bad as he was her pagan father loved her dearly and was resolved that no one should ever deprive him of the child whom he prized beyond everything else that he possessed. We hear nothing of the mother

of Barbara, so in all probability she was dead, and it may have been that Dioscorus had loved her and grieved for her loss, transferring to the little one the affection he had felt for the mother who was gone. At any rate, he passionately loved the child, and she was so fair and winning that all who looked upon her admired her and foretold that she would grow up beautiful and good. I can not tell you whether or not Dioscorus was pleased when his little daughter was admired, but certain it is that he was very jealous of her love. So he determined to build a lofty tower far away from the city in which he dwelt, and there shut up the child with her maids and attendants, so that none might see or visit her save himself.

All round the tower he laid out pleasant gardens adorned with all the rarest plants and flowers of which he knew and ornamented with fountains of sparkling water and statues of the heathen gods. He built a high wall round the place when it was finished, and sent the little one to live in her tower, where she was provided with maidens of her own

age to play with, who were her servants more-over and might contradict her in nothing, and with every pleasure and luxury that could please a child. When Barbara grew old enough to take an interest in study her father procured learned professors—they were called doctors and philosophers in those days—to teach her whatever she might care to learn, for he thought that in time she might come to love her books so well that she would not care for the society of men.

Everything fell out just as he wished. The little maiden was never so happy as when poring over the cumbrous parchments which were the only books procurable then, or when listening attentively to the conversations of some old greybeard from Egypt or Athens who told her wonderful tales of the strange countries he had visited or stories of the heroes of old times. I do not know whether or not it was considered necessary among the pagans to instruct little girls in what they called religion, but I have said that Dioscorus had adorned the grounds about Barbara's tower with many statues of the gods.

So it came to pass quite naturally that in course of time the little maiden inquired whom and what these figures were intended to represent, and why they were placed in her garden, rather than those of other great men. Her father explained that these were the statues of Jupiter, Mars, and the rest of the gods who dwelt in Olympus and ruled the destinies of mortals here below. He told her that it was her duty to honor these deities, who might possibly revenge themselves by doing her harm if she did not, and that when she grew older he would take her to the temples where sacrifices were offered, and there she should burn incense on the altars of Jupiter and Minerva, who was a goddess devoted to books and wisdom as she herself was. Barbara longed to know more of these wonderful beings who were said to possess so much power, and she soon began to question her professors about the gods. They told her all the stories the poets had written, and at first she listened eagerly enough, but these tales wearied and troubled her in time. How could these beings, she asked herself,

who went to war with one another and even with men, and were conquered by them sometimes, be worshiped and honored as gods? She was told that she must bow down and offer sacrifice to Juno and Venus, and yet she knew that these so-called deities were said to have been guilty of many things that even in her, a little pagan, would have been crimes.

All this puzzled her sadly and she thought over it as children are apt to think over what they can not understand, without speaking to any one, for she most likely believed that when she grew older everything would be made clear. But, instead of that, the puzzle became greater, and at last, when she had pondered and considered for a very long time, she knew that she had been taught what was untrue, and determined that she would never be persuaded to offer sacrifice or burn incense before the statues of the gods. Moreover, she felt certain that there must be in truth a God, but that He must be one and all-powerful, or how could He be said to be God at all? All this she said one day to a learned

doctor who was discoursing great wisdom in his own way, and asked him to explain to her what the truth might be. Then he told her that there were in the world at that very time many who thought as she did, but confessed that for his own part he knew little of their belief. "But there dwells at this day in Egypt," he said, "a learned doctor named Origen whose teaching is like to your belief. He belongs to a sect of which I know and can tell you but little, for I have not studied in their schools. But this Origen is a great master among them, and he hath, besides, all the knowledge of the Romans and the Greeks. He teacheth many in Alexandria, where he is held in great repute, but how you may come at him I know not, for he hath a multitude of disciples in Egypt and may scarcely leave them for the sake of one."

Barbara thought much on the words of the philosopher, and the more she thought the greater became her longing to meet this Origen who could teach her of the one, only God. She was no longer a child, for many years had passed by since she had come to

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dwell in her tower, and her father allowed her to do her will in all things, provided she wished not to mingle in the society of men. So she called to her a slave who had dwelt with her from childhood and knew no pleasure that was not hers, and giving him a great sum of money, bade him travel into Egypt, and in the city of Alexandria seek out a learned man named Origen, and deliver into his hands a letter which she gave him. She had no thought of deceiving her father and said to him simply that she was sending into Egypt for a learned philosopher who could teach her much that she would know. And Dioscorus, who only longed to keep her happy and content in her tower, was well pleased.

If you have been studying Church History you must remember what you have read or heard about Origen. You know his father had been martyred when Origen himself was an infant, or little more, and how his mother devoted herself to bringing up her boy in the love and fear of God. You have heard too how, in those early days when books were few and it was sometimes difficult even for

those who wished to do right to believe only what the Church taught—and teaches still, for what she teaches can never change;—you have heard, I say, how Origen himself fell into error and for a time was led astray. But his heart was right, and he came to know his mistakes and did penance. In the end he was the means of leading many to the knowledge of God. At the time when Barbara sent to him he was teaching in Egypt, and much as he would have wished it, was unable to go to Nicomedia just then. But he would not leave a soul in darkness that was seeking so earnestly for light, and so he sent back with Barbara's messenger a holy priest named Valentinian, whom he instructed to teach the noble lady all the truths of the Christian belief.

Valentinian came to the tower and was admitted as a learned doctor who would give the maiden lessons on the nature of the gods. And this was what Barbara herself believed the messenger of Origen to be. And now a change came over the daughter of Dioscorus. She sent away all the philosophers with whom

she had so loved to converse and spent all her time, with her nurse, listening to the discourse of Valentinian. He was an able instructor and Barbara was quick to learn, so that in a very short time the good priest believed that she was ready for holy Baptism; and she longed to receive the sacrament which was to make her truly a child of the God whom she had learned to love with all her heart. I am sure you will think with me that He must have loved her very dearly too, since He had, if we may with reverence say so, taken such pains to keep her unspotted from the wicked world in which she lived, and had filled her heart with so earnest a desire to know the truth.

But when did our good God leave those whom He loves without trials in this life? And as yet Barbara had encountered none. They were to come now, and the first was a severe one. Before he could pour the saving waters on the head of his young convert Valentinian was called away. I can not tell you the reason of his departure at such a time; perhaps his presence was considered by

his superiors to be more absolutely necessary elsewhere, or he may have been called away to comfort and console some members of the Church of God who were suffering persecution for their faith. Whatever may have been the cause, it is certain that he went, leaving the young convert in desolation of spirit, for she did not know when she might have an opportunity of speaking to a priest again. When Valentinian had left her, Barbara went in her sorrow to a chamber wherein she had been wont to pray, and casting herself upon her knees upon the ground, she said: "Almighty and everlasting God! eternal! Three in One! who has deigned in Thine infinite mercy to look upon me, a poor child, and show me the beauty of Thy truth! Thou to whom all things are possible! Hear my prayer, I beseech Thee, and grant that I may receive the grace of holy Baptism this day. Let me not linger on the threshold of Thy Church who so ardently desire to become one of Thy children. Thou hast many saints and angels in Thy heavenly kingdom, ministers who do Thy will. Send one of

them to the help of Thy servant, and let not my trust in Thee be in vain."

When Barbara had made this prayer she bowed her head upon the ground in timid lowliness, for it came upon her that she was only a poor, simple maiden, and that she had asked a wondrous favor at the hand of God. But when was He known to disappoint the hope of them who trust in Him? While she knelt almost prostrate before Him and dared not look up, a hand touched her very gently and a voice whose every tone was music called her name. "Who art thou that callest me?" said Barbara without raising her head; and the heavenly voice made answer: "I am John, whom men call the Precursor of the Most High. And to thee am I sent that I may baptize thee, and by the touch of the healing waters make thee indeed a child of God. For thy prayer hath ascended to heaven, and His angels who love thee have presented it before His throne. Arise therefore, quickly, and do as I shall bid thee, and the desire of thy heart shall be given to thee this day." Then Barbara arose and saw standing before

her one clad wondrously in garments such as she had never looked upon before. His face shone with a heavenly radiance and he held in his hand a gem of marvelous size and beauty fashioned into the semblance of a shell. "Make the sign of Christ's most holy cross where I shall show thee," he said, "and by the power of God water will flow wherein thou mayst be baptized."

Barbara stooped as she was commanded, and made the holy sign upon the marble floor, and straightway a fountain of pure water that flowed in the shape of a cross sprang up beneath her hand. There was a large vase of white marble standing in the place, and Barbara set it over the cross-shaped stream and the waters gathered themselves up and flowed into the vase. Then the great Precursor bent above the kneeling maiden and baptized her, and while she knelt in ecstatic thanksgiving he disappeared. How long Barbara remained upon her knees beside the miraculous fountain I can not tell you. She herself never knew, for her soul was lost in adoration and love. But presently she heard a voice once more

calling her by her name and, turning her face toward the sound, she saw One standing beside her clad in radiant garments—shining as the sun—more beautiful than anything that earth can show—and she knew at once that it was the Lord, in whose blessed name she had a short time before been baptized. In His hand He carried a green palm branch which He gave to Barbara, and upon her finger He placed a ring of purest gold. And He said: “With this ring I espouse thee to be Mine forever. To no other shalt thou belong. And the palm branch is a token that thou shalt suffer much for My sake, and through the rough and bitter pains of martyrdom shalt thou come to thy reward.” Then the Lord Jesus vanished, and Barbara was left kneeling there alone.

When Dioscorus came to visit his daughter he saw the fountain flowing in the chamber, and marveled how it had been brought thither, and why. But willing to do her pleasure in all things, he sent for men who were well skilled in such work and ordered them to make a bath in that chamber and furnish the

room with all luxuries that maidens love. And this was done. Now, although Dioscorus kept his daughter in close retirement and willed that she should be known to none, the fame of her beauty and grace had gone abroad and there were many who desired to look upon her. The nobles of the country came to Dioscorus reproaching him with keeping in concealment so rare a gem and entreating him to bring Barbara from the close concealment in which she had been kept till now. At first he turned a deaf ear to their prayers and persuasions, but perhaps in his heart he longed to show his lovely daughter to the world, for at last he yielded, and many visitors came to see the maiden in her tower. And forthwith followed the suit which her father had dreaded—that he would give Barbara in marriage to one or other of the noble youths who would have been so proud to make her his wife. But the mind of Dioscorus had changed on this matter, and he thought within himself that this was the only child the gods had bestowed on him, and that if she died unwedded his name and race must

perish from the earth. So he laid before Barbara the demands of her suitors and besought her to choose a spouse from among the youths whom she knew. Then, with many tears, did the maiden entreat her father to bear in mind the promise he had so often made that she should abide with him always, and how he had built for her a tower in which she might dwell apart from all men to no other end but this. So he comforted her with words of kindness and insisted not at that time.

But now his heart was set upon this marriage and he was determined to win Barbara to do his will. So he made a plan to leave her for a while and to travel into distant parts, deeming that on his return he should find her ready to do as he would. But after her father had left her Barbara had far other thoughts than those of marriage, for she put away that matter and gave her mind entirely to the consideration of the love and goodness of God. And so inflamed was her heart with the desire of pleasing Him that she could not endure the idea of anything about her which

was not for Him. And she looked upon the chamber in which the great Precursor had baptized her and in which she had been espoused to her eternal Bridegroom as more sacred than any other place; and as the workmen were still busy with the bath which her father had designed for her pleasure, she ordered them to carve little crosses for its adornment, to mark crosses on the pillars of marble, and to set a cross above the urn into which the water flowed. Looking upon the gardens with their statues and fountains, she sighed because so many images of false gods were set therein and of the true God whom alone she loved and worshiped she had not one and neither did she know how such an image should be designed. Now, while Barbara thought much about this and was sad, it came into her mind that the God whom she worshiped was and is the one true Light of all the world and that therefore in light alone could His image be drawn.

And since He is Three in One, she had a third window added to the two which already gave light to the chamber in the highest part

of her tower, that by the one light streaming through the three apertures she might have a faint reflection of the ever Blessed Trinity. Then did God put into her heart the desire to see in the grounds and house which belonged to Him since they were hers no other image than His, and she made her servants break to pieces and overthrow all those statues in bronze and copper and marble in which her father took such pride.

When he returned he found what he thought desolation in the place which he had left so fair. And entering into the bath-chamber, he saw the crosses which had been carved there, and angrily demanded whose work they were, and who had dared cast down the statues of the gods. In fear and trembling they told him that by the order of Barbara all these things had been done, and in his heart he blamed himself because the maiden had done her will in all things for so long, and he determined that it should be so no more. Still, he was unwilling to show harshness to his daughter, so, calling her to him, he told her that the time had now come

when she must take a husband of her own choosing or one whom he himself would provide. And when she wept and implored him not to send her from him, for that she loved no man on earth but him, he smiled and said that she must do as other maidens and that he could allow her no longer to lead the life of a child.

“And, indeed, my daughter, thou hast been a child already too long,” he said, “as these broken statues and defaced fountains bear witness to-day. Wherefore hast thou overthrown and demolished in a day what I was so many years in preparing to adorn thy home, and how is it that I find the cross, which is, as thou well knowest, a sign of disgrace, everywhere upon the walls of thy tower?”

Barbara knew that now the time was come when she must make confession of her faith. So she told her father that she had destroyed the statues because they were idols and consecrated to the demon whose enemy she must always be. And that she had erected the holy cross in her dwelling because it is the sign

of salvation, and she besought her father to honor it with her. But he, in a great fury, reproached her as a traitress and an ungrateful child who had turned his love and care for her against himself. He then declared that she must forthwith wed the husband to whom he would give her, or he would denounce her to the governor of Nicomedia as a Christian and an enemy of the gods. Having so spoken, he drove her from his presence and caused her to be imprisoned in one of the apartments of the tower in which she had ruled since she was a little one. While she prayed and wept in her sorrow there stood beside her a most beautiful Child, who smiled upon her so sweetly that her tears were dried and she would fain have embraced Him; but He put her aside with His hand, and when it was outstretched toward her she saw that it was all wounded and pierced. While she still gazed in love and wonder on the Child, a crown of thorns appeared upon His brow, that but a moment before had been so bright and shining, and lo! there were deep wounds in His feet and side.

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“Oh, beautiful infant, who hath wounded Thee thus?” she asked. And the Child made answer:

“For thee and such as thou was I wounded and slain; and those who slew Me were my brethren and them of My house. Yet did I bear all gladly for love of thee. Wilt thou not also consent to suffer somewhat for love of Me?” But she answered: “Whatever Thou wilt I should suffer I am content to bear, for now I know that Thou art my Lord and only Love.” Then the divine Child disappeared, leaving Barbara so happy that she wept no more. Her father came to her after that and demanded if she were yet resolved to do his will. And she told him that she would do his will most gladly in all lawful matters, but that she could neither sacrifice to idols, nor marry, since she worshiped one, only, true and living God, and she had consecrated her virginity to Him. And Dioscorus waxed furious as he heard, and swore with many oaths that he would make her repent and do his will. When he saw that Barbara was in no wise frightened by his

threats he changed his tone and wept, entreating her to remember how hateful the Christian religion had become to the emperor and how all who professed it were persecuted and disgraced. What would Maximilian say or do should it come to his knowledge, as it certainly must, that the proscribed religion was practised in the very household of Dioscorus, in whom he had always reposed the most perfect trust.

The maiden answered only by her tears; and when her father could by no means prevail either by threats or entreaties, seizing the sword that hung at his side, he made as though in his anger he would put an end to her life. Now, Barbara wished with all her strength to suffer somewhat for the sake of her Spouse who had delivered Himself to torments and to death for her, and would gladly have shed the last drop of her blood for Him, but not by the hands of her father. So in the hope of sparing him the commission of an awful crime she fled from her tower, and took refuge in a mountain that rose behind her garden and the grounds around.

Dioscorus followed, for he had lost all control over his evil passions, and had become as one seized by madness because of his wrath. Barbara fled to a cavern on the hillside, which was hidden by a thick growth of bushes and flowering things from the eyes of the passers-by, and there she might have lain in safety only that two young shepherds who tended their flocks on the mountains witnessed her flight and betrayed her to her father when he asked if they had seen a maiden pass that way. Then he entered the cavern and, seizing Barbara by the shining tresses of which he had once been so proud, he dragged her down the side of the mountain and placed her once more in the tower. He would have slain her in his brutal wrath but that he stood in fear of the anger of Maximilian and the indignation of those who knew his daughter and would fain have taken her as a wife.

But he bound her limbs with chains of iron and had her cruelly scourged by her own slaves. He allowed none to bring food to Barbara and kept her confined night and day in a noisome dungeon made for the punish-

ment of unruly slaves. And still in nothing was she shaken, so that her unnatural father, into whom the devil must surely have entered for the time, resolved to give up his daughter to the Governor Marcian, who hated the Christians and had put very many of them in that country to the sword. But before she was taken from the tower in which she had learned and suffered so much, her divine Spouse, who never forgets or forsakes those who suffer for His love, appeared once more to Barbara, and cheered her for the conflict on which she was about to enter.

He promised to be with her during the flight and that His grace should sustain her to the end. Then she was dragged before the heathen judge who had treated so cruelly others of the faith, and even he, who had never been known to show mercy to any, was shocked and horrified at the treatment Barbara had received from the father who had once loved her so much that he had declared that he would not even suffer her to wed. Marcian spoke very gently and strove by all means that lay in his power to win the Chris-

tian maiden to renounce her faith, but it was not likely that she would yield to a stranger what her own father had failed to obtain. Then followed the old story which you have so often read before. Barbara was subjected to every torment which heathen cruelty could invent; and when they found that she was proof against them all, she was thrown into a dark dungeon. A glorious angel was sent from heaven to comfort her, and when the executioners came to bring her once more before the judge in the morning all her wounds were healed.

Perhaps Marcian might have been satisfied, thinking that he had done his worst, but Dioscorus was determined that Barbara should yield to his wishes or die. Marcian commanded the guards to lead her back to the prison and leave her there for several hours, during which she might make up her mind whether she would obey the emperor or not. If at the end of the time she remained obstinate she would be stripped of her garments and led through the streets of the city exposed to the gaze of the rude heathen crowd. But

Dioscorus was very angry and said that further punishment should be inflicted now. The judge asked Barbara if she were ready to submit, and when she answered no, and reproached him for his cruelty and shamelessness in ordering such savage and unheard of punishments to be inflicted on modest maidens, he told her that yet worse should she suffer unless she at once consented to obey her father and himself.

“In all things lawful will I gladly obey,” Barbara answered; “but the law of the God whom I serve comes before all the commandments of men. Therefore must you do the worst that He allows you, for beyond what He permits you may not go.” The fury of a demon possessed the soul of Marcian when he heard a young and tender maiden declare that bounds were set to his power, and he swore that she should do as he would. He ordered the executioners to tear her tender flesh with red hot pincers until the bones could be seen. Then he sent her back to her dungeon, commanding that she should be led through the streets of the city in the after-

noon, when the greatest crowd of people would be assembled and the report of her coming would have been noised abroad. When Barbara returned to the prison she knelt upon the tiles of the floor and implored Our Lord to spare her that shame.

“Thou knowest, O my Spouse,” she said, “that with a glad heart I am ready to bear all the sufferings they can inflict on this poor body for the love of Thee. But spare me, I beseech Thee, the disgrace of appearing unclothed before the multitude who love Thee not and scorn Thy blessed name.” And straightway came two angels, who clothed the maiden in a robe of wondrous splendor, such perhaps as she would wear in heaven; and when the executioners tried to despoil her of this they could not take it away.

Great was the wrath of Marcian when he heard of this. He declared that Barbara was a witch and that the powers of evil assisted her. But she laughed when he said this. “If I were indeed a sorceress, as you say,” she said, “wherefore should I have suffered all the tortures you have inflicted? and where-

fore am I here to-day? And who are the powers you call evil? Can they be worse than the gods you bid me bow down to and adore?" Then was Marcian more furious than ever. He declared that he would not send this witch among the crowds to practise her sorceries on them and pervert their souls; so he ordered that she should be beheaded at once. Now, surely those evil powers of which he spoke must have entered the soul of Dioscorus, for he demanded as his right that he should be her executioner; and he had his will, to his everlasting loss. He dragged the martyr to the place of execution outside the walls and not far from the dwelling which in her childhood he had built apart from the habitations of men, that he might keep her always as his own; and raising the sword aloft in savage fury, he struck off her head at one blow.

The very pagans were horrified when the awful deed was done, and terror seized upon the souls of all. The sky was blue and cloudless, there was no sign of tempest in the sunny air, but as the head of the blessed martyr fell

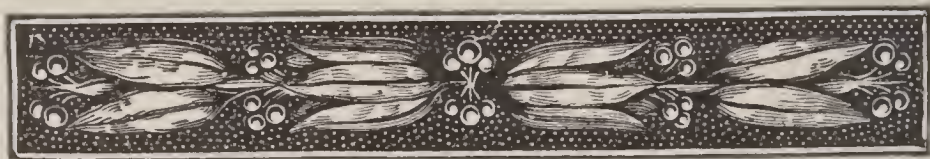
beneath the sword one single flash of lightning darted from the summer heavens, followed by a crash of thunder so loud and terrible as had never been heard by any one in the crowd before. When they looked around after the shock they saw that the vengeance of heaven had fallen—Marcian and Dioscorus were dead. The Christians took up the body of the virgin martyr and laid it reverently to rest. For many years it lay in the church at Nicomedia, and then it was translated to Rome. Portions of her precious relics are now found in many places, and she has always been regarded as one of her most highly favored children by the Church. I ought to have told you that just before the fatal stroke fell Barbara implored Our Lord that no one who was devout to her and invoked her protection might die without the last sacraments, and for that reason she is represented carrying a chalice or a ciborium in her hand. You may see in her picture the palm which she won by her glorious martyrdom, and behind her is usually drawn the tower in which she spent so many years, with its three windows near the top.

Saint Barbara has been invoked from the early ages of the Church in tempest and storms because of the punishment which overtook her cruel father and the wicked judge. She is the patroness of scholars, of miners, and of all who work in metals and the manufacture of arms. Far up in the Rocky Mountains there is at this day a colony of Italian miners who love and invoke the gentle saint, and not very long since they thanked God with all their hearts because He sent a priest to visit them and give them the sacraments on the feast of Saint Barbara. Saint Stanislaus loved her very dearly and belonged to a Sodality erected in her honor in the Jesuits' College at Vienna. I have told you in another place how she brought the Blessed Sacrament to her young client when he believed himself to be at the point of death. She loved study when she was a lonely child shut up in the tower at Nicomedia and cut off from most of the pleasures which delighted other children of her age, and through that love of study she came to the knowledge of the one, true God. Invoke her then, when you think your lessons

difficult or dry, as I am sure you do sometimes, and without doubt she will help you as she helped Saint Stanislaus and many another who has called upon her for aid.

Saint Barbara, pray for us.





What Saint Barbara Did.



SAINT Barbara? Saint Barbara is in heaven, and has been there for more than a thousand years; how can you, or any one possibly know what she did? My dear, clever little girl—for the boys are *so* clever they will scarcely condescend to read about Saint Barbara, who was, they will say, *only* a girl—the saints have ways of their own of communicating with their particular friends, even if they are so far off in heaven, which, by the way, is a great deal nearer to all of us than you probably suppose. Read this little story, which is about Saint Barbara and one of her *very* particular friends, and you will find that I am telling you the truth.

Sometime about the year 1562 there lived in Vienna two lads who had been sent thither by their parents from Poland for the purpose of studying in the Jesuit College which had

been lately opened in the city. Day by day they were seen by the good people of Vienna walking through the streets that led to the school, attended by a youth who carried their books and his own, for they were the sons of a Polish prince and he had hired this boy to wait upon his children while he pursued his own studies in the same class with them. The elder of the two Polish boys was named Paul Kostka. He had a full sense of the importance of his position as eldest son, and never lost any opportunity that presented itself of impressing the fact of his superiority on the mind of his brother Stanislaus, although the latter was his junior only by a year. A tutor whose business it was to give orders when any were needed, had been sent with them from Poland by their father, but John Belinsky, for that was his name, did not wish to lose favor with Paul by contradicting him, so that young gentleman usually contrived to get his own way. And his way was not always what it ought to have been. During the first six months of their residence in Vienna the young Poles with their tutor and three

attendants lived in a boarding-house attached to the College and occupied by the Jesuit Fathers, and for that time all went well with them. They learned their tasks, kept good company, and said their prayers as Christian boys should, besides attending dancing and riding schools, and taking lessons in fencing, deportment, and all the other accomplishments which were looked upon as necessary to the polite education of a gentleman in those days.

Paul and the tutor found the regular life which they were compelled to lead in the College a little irksome, we may suppose, but Stanislaus was as happy as the day was long. His happiness soon came to an end. The emperor, to whom the house belonged, refused to allow the Fathers to retain the use of it, and all the students were obliged to seek for lodgings elsewhere, although they attended class in the College as before. And now the troubles of Stanislaus began. You will remember, that is, if you have been studying Modern or Church History lately, that at this time the so-called Reformation had

been begun by Martin Luther, and you know that it made great progress and did great mischief in Germany, where even the emperor was supposed to regard the new doctrines with a favorable eye. I never heard that either Paul Kostka or Belinsky was inclined to heresy, but perhaps they thought that in the house of a Lutheran they could lead a life of more freedom and enjoy more pleasures than in one belonging to a Catholic, and with less danger of their doings being reported to the good Fathers who, we may well think, would be anxious to keep an eye upon their charge. At all events the tutor engaged apartments in the house of a Lutheran senator—I am not quite sure that I know what the precise nature of the duties of a German senator at that time would be—and there Stanislaus, who would have much preferred to remain in his old quarters, was compelled to take up his abode.

I suppose that in these days most of us, if choice were allowed, would prefer a private sleeping-room to sharing an apartment with several other persons, even although they

were chosen companions and friends. Privacy is a privilege of the time in which we live. People thought and cared less about it in the sixteenth century, as you will learn if you take the trouble to study a good history of the time. This may have been the reason why Stanislaus was compelled to share a room in which slept his brother, a cousin of his own name, a friend and classmate, and probably an attendant besides. I dare say the young men were not too quiet to indulge in a pillow fight at times—or in whatever form of amusement corresponded to a pillow fight in those days—but they entertained a very decided objection to saying long prayers or allowing others to do so. Now, Stanislaus had not forgotten the habits which he had learned from his pious mother, who had watched with the utmost care over her son, and as he had little time or opportunity for saying his prayers during the day, he often tried at night to make up for omissions. This his companions were determined not to allow. They teased and tormented him as only boys on mischief bent have been able to do since (I

should think) the foundation of the world. They pinched him, pulled his hair, took away his book or rosary, put out his candle, and when, finding it impossible to pray on his knees, he took to lying prostrate at the side of his bed, one of them, his cousin Stanislaus, pretended not to know where he was and jumped on him again and again. Paul ought to have prevented this ill treatment of his younger brother, as he might easily have done, but he was worse than the rest. Belinski was as bad, and between them all poor Stanislaus, when not in the College, led a miserable life.

There are probably few boys who, at some period or other, have not to undergo their share of teasing at the hands of their companions, and sometimes more than a fair share, too. So you may not feel disposed to sympathize very strongly with Stanislaus on this account. But you must remember that he was hundreds of miles away from home and friends, and that the youths who tormented him were the very persons from whom alone he had a right to look for affection and

help. But these were not the worst of his troubles. He had been sent into Germany for the express purpose of completing his education; and being thoroughly conscientious, he was anxious to carry out his father's wishes in that respect. The hours he could devote to his books were very few and Paul tried to curtail even those. He loved pleasure and the companionship of gay youths of his own age and rank better than the dry books (it must be confessed that they were very dry) over which Stanislaus felt it to be his duty to pore whether he liked them or not. So Paul tried to induce his brother to accompany him to parties and merrymakings and punished him severely when Stanislaus refused to go. Many a time the poor boy was beaten and even drenched with cold water until he was wet to the skin because he was determined to do what was right; while the tutor, although he dared not lift his own hand against his master's son, did not interfere to protect him from the cruelty of Paul. Then, the Lutheran in whose house the boys lived sneered at and made fun of their religion as often as he

could, human respect preventing the young men from resenting such behavior as they ought to have done. By degrees they became ashamed of the practices of their religion—all except Stanislaus, who abstained on the proper days and even fasted sometimes, and went regularly to the sacraments in spite of them all.

And what has all this to do with Saint Barbara? We have not had a word about her yet. Very true; but Rome was not built in a day. Saint Barbara is coming, as all good things do to those who wait patiently. There was established in the Jesuits' College at Vienna a Confraternity in honor of Saint Barbara, and to this Confraternity Stanislaus belonged, and was, moreover, very devout to his holy patroness. Why he was not a Child of Mary I can not tell you; perhaps the Sodality was not founded yet. Indeed, I think that must have been the case. It certainly was from no lack of devotion on the part of Stanislaus, for he loved our blessed Mother dearly, and received holy communion in her honor on all her great feasts. However it

may have been, to Saint Barbara's Sodality he belonged, and did all things in his lady's honor well and faithfully, like the gallant little knight he was.

And as well became him to do, you will say. But brave knights, especially young ones, are not always giants, however gallant they may be. Stanislaus bore his sufferings in patient silence, never once complaining in his "letters home," or to the Fathers at the College, who might easily have helped him, one would suppose. His will was good to endure, but his strength was not equal to the continual struggle, and he fell dangerously ill. Then matters became worse than ever. The poor boy was unable to leave his room or even his bed, and could no longer take refuge in the church as heretofore he had been accustomed to do. John Belinski was obliged to relinquish his own pleasures and pursuits to remain with the patient, and this did not improve his temper, I dare say. To crown all, the Lutheran senator absolutely refused to allow a Catholic priest to enter his house, so that Stanislaus was deprived of the consolation of

receiving the sacraments when he believed himself to be in danger of death. It was all in vain that he besought his tutor to send for his confessor; John only replied by declaring that it was folly to call in a priest when Stanislaus was in no danger at all, and would be able to go to the church himself in a few days. But Stanislaus felt that unless he might receive his Lord in the Blessed Sacrament he should never go to church again; and although he was quite willing to die whenever God should think fit to call him, yet he longed unspeakably for the consolation of one more visit from his Lord in the sweet Sacrament of His love before death should come. But all his friends turned a deaf ear to his prayers and entreaties, so he went for comfort to Saint Barbara and begged her, since he might not enjoy the blessed privilege of which, in his humility, he believed himself to be unworthy, at least to obtain for him the grace to be resigned in this, as in all things, to the holy **will** of God.

And now comes the history of what Saint Barbara did. The whole house was silent,

for it was night. Every one, except Stanislaus and the tutor who watched beside him, was fast asleep. I suppose that the sick boy had been removed to a separate chamber during his illness, for he and his nurse were alone, when suddenly a clear soft light stole into the apartment, and Stanislaus, opening his eyes, beheld a most wonderful sight. The door of the room was gently unclosed, and a most lovely lady, so lovely that he had never even imagined anything like her, came up to his bed. She was attended by two angels and in her hands she bore the Most Blessed Sacrament. Bending gently and lovingly over the sick boy, she asked him if he were ready to receive the heavenly Guest who had come to visit him, and you may imagine what the answer of Stanislaus would be. Then she gave the Most Blessed Sacrament to her beloved child, and the soul of the boy was rapt in ecstasy as he realized the love and condescension of the great God, who had deigned to come to Him in his sick-room when he himself was unable to go to the church to receive Him. Then

Saint Barbara and the angels went away as softly as they had come, leaving Stanislaus almost as happy as if he had caught a glimpse of the heavenly country which he hoped so soon to see. But it was not the holy will of God that he should go home then. Stanislaus was to reach far greater heights of sanctity than he had as yet attained, and to learn the ways of God in another school. He eventually became a novice in the Society of Jesus, and a very great saint. He died when he was only eighteen in years, but in holiness he had achieved more than many who lived to be much older than he. I had better add that both his brother Paul and the tutor John Belinski came to repent bitterly of their unkindness to the holy youth, and both died good and saintly men. Let us try to imitate Saint Stanislaus and ask him to pray for us. And now you know what St. Barbara did.

Saint Stanislaus, pray for us.



Saint Werburgh's Goose.



THE Abbess St. Werburgh, of royal
degree,
Owned the finest grey goose
'twixt the hills and the sea ;
Of manner so perfect, of culture so rare,
Scarce a goose in the land with that goose
could compare.

But one evil habit the creature possessed
That deprived the poor abbess of comfort and
rest ;
In hall, cell, or cloister, where'er she had been,
The track of the grey goose might plainly be
seen.

Then all through the convent deep murmurs
arose
Whereby one might perceive the grey goose
had foes

Who loudly proclaimed that the animal's place
Was down at the farm with the rest of his
race.

The abbess was kind, and made kindly excuse ;
Though a wonderful bird, he was still but a
goose ;

And in this all agreed, but 'twas slyly averred
That he was a great goose though a wonder-
ful bird.

'Twas a small thing, perhaps, that a goose
such as he,

Should be found in all places where geese
should not be ;

But the matter, 'twas feared, might become
an abuse,

And each sister be followed about by a goose.

So for peace' sake the abbess called up to her
side

The convent farm steward ; "Good Hubert,"
she cried ;

"Take my grey goose away to the rest of his
kin

In the paddock below, and lock him safe in.

“But bear this in mind, you must never pre-
sume
To the spit or the pie-dish my grey goose to
doom.
He shall live and be happy, though exiled
he be,
And this you'll remember, or answer to me.”

“Lady Abbess,” said Hubert, “your pardon
I crave;
“’Twere a sin and a folly that grey goose to
save.
You may search through the kingdom and
never will find
A bird half as plump or as much to your
mind.”

No word spake the abbess, but lifted her
eyes;
And Hubert made off with the speed of the
wise.
But he murmured in passing, “’Twill go hard
with me
If I win not this grey goose my dinner to be.”

Days passed, and the abbess (which was not
her use)
Went down to the paddock to visit her goose.
But alas, and alack! in the whole of the ground
Not a token or trace of that goose could be
found.

She summoned the steward and bade him
bring there
On the instant the bird she had given to his
care;
And he stammered, and stuttered, and mut-
tered quite low,
“The grey goose was there but a moment
ago.”

Oh, then spake the abbess, and sternly said
she,
“I bid thee my grey goose bring hither to me;
When men turn deceivers 'tis time that at
least
The truth should be learned from the bird
and the beast.”

A sound of faint rattling—and fast on the
stones,

At the abbess' feet, fell a shower of small
bones ;
Small bones that were polished, and shining,
and white,
And the poor wretched steward half died with
affright.

Those bones turned and writhed, near and
nearer they came,
While Hubert looked on ; and in terror and
shame,
Saw uprise the poor goose of its life late
bereft—
At least, uprose the bones—they were all he
had left.

Then louted that steward low down on his
knee,
And cried, "Lady Abbess ! take pity on me !
Lend an ear of compassion ; my guilt I will
tell ;
At the sight of that goose I was tempted and
fell.

“But Lady, have mercy! It never was heard
That a man should be slain for the loss of a
bird;
Spare my life, and you'll find on the farm I'm
of use;
You would miss your poor steward far more
than a goose.”

Spake sternly the abbess: “No word has been
said,
O coward deceiver, of taking thy head;
But for use? I have none for the man that
could lie
And steal for the sake of a wretched goose
pie.

“But for thee, my grey goose, rise in beauty
once more;
Wear the feathers and down thou wert
clothed in before;
And since he bereft thee of life that was thine,
Give thou his deserts to this steward of mine.”

The goose cackled loud, shook a new coat of
grey,

And ran at the man—but the man ran away;
And when he returned it was late in the night,
When the fowls were at roost and the goose
out of sight.

Thenceforward whenever he happened to
walk
Near the paddock, at once a hiss and a
squawk,
And long neck outstretched, at the head of
his clan
Up charged the grey goose—and away went
the man.

And the wise folk aver that from that time
to this
Geese assail thieves and—fibbers—with cackle
and hiss;
So ere you encounter those truth-loving birds
Consider your deeds and look well to your
words.



Some Stories about Saint Martin of Tours.

THERE are some stories told of Saint Martin of Tours which I am sure most of you have heard many times, and you are too old now to cry out as you did when you were little ones—perhaps it was so long ago that you do not even remember it—“Oh *please* tell us the story you told us yesterday!” So I need not remind you that Saint Martin was a brave soldier (the boys always love him for that very reason) nor that he is said to have had a sister called Conchessa who was the mother of St. Patrick, the apostle and beloved protector of the Emerald Isle. Did you ever hear what was the age of Saint Martin when he cut his military cloak in two in order to give half of it to the beggar? No? Well, he was not quite eighteen. The saints were never too young to practise charity

toward the poor, it would seem. Moreover, he was not yet baptized. That appears rather strange to some of you, who are accustomed to see your baby brothers and sisters carried to the church for holy Baptism when they are little more than a few days old. But Saint Martin was born in times when the custom of conferring infant Baptism was less frequent than it has since become, now that the days of persecution are over and there is less fear that the little ones may become pagans when they grow up. It was shortly after giving, or rather sharing his cloak with the poor man that Martin was baptized, and then he wished to leave the army and consecrate himself entirely to the service of God. But he had a friend—a soldier like himself—who promised that if Martin would continue in the service of the emperor two years longer he too would devote himself to a life of holiness at the end of that time. Martin consented to this and at the end of the two years determined to put his resolve into execution.

The army was going into battle just then, and it seems to have been the custom to dis-

tribute sums of money among the soldiers before commencing the campaign. When they were all assembled to receive the largess and it came to Martin's turn he gratefully declined to accept the share that was offered him. He did not intend to join in the expedition against the Germans, he said—the Germans were the enemies the Romans were fighting then—and so it would be unfair to deprive those who were going into battle of so much of the gold as would be given to him. Now what would you think or say of the soldier who, on the very eve of a battle with the fiercest foes against whom the Romans had had to contend, would coolly declare that he meant to shirk the fight. Well, I suspect that just at first you would say as Martin's comrades did—that such a man was a coward and afraid to face the foe. Older people than you are know very well that far more true courage was required to enable him to carry out his resolution at such a time than to march to battle with the rest. The soldiers called him a coward and, saint as he was, the young officer felt the reproach.

“You are wrong,” he said; “set me to-morrow in the front of the battle, with no weapon except the sign of the cross, and judge by my behavior whether I am a coward or not.” These were bold words and the rough soldiers scarcely knew what to think of them, or of the young Christian who spoke them. Martin spent that night in prayer in his tent, and early next morning came messengers from the German camp bearing overtures of peace, so the looked-for battle was not fought after all. Martin left the camp to find the bishop of Treves, with whom he went to Rome, and he remained with that holy man until his death.

I am not going to tell you the whole life of Saint Martin, partly because it would be much too long and we should find room for nothing else in this little book; partly because I promised you *stories*, and there is much to be told about the great bishop which perhaps will scarcely interest you as yet.

Although the saint himself had been converted to the true faith at an early age, his parents were still pagans, for many idolators

remained in Europe in the fifth century, which was the time at which Saint Martin lived. His father was a military tribune as you may remember the great Saint Sebastian to have been in the days of the previous persecution, and was not at all pleased to think that his only son should have deserted the faith, or want of faith, of his heathenish ancestors, and the service of his emperor, in order to become a teacher among the Christians, whom we may suppose the old Roman to have very heartily despised. Now, Martin was far more grieved about his father's blindness than his father could possibly be about the conversion of his son; and he resolved to make at least one effort to win the old man to the true faith. He crossed the Alps to Pavia, where his parents lived, and earnestly besought them to study the new doctrines; and if they should be convinced of their truth, as he knew quite well by the grace of God they would be, to embrace the Catholic faith. His mother consented to do this and was baptized, but his father remained obstinate, and Martin was compelled to return to France,

leaving him a pagan still. His way led over the Alps, whose recesses were infested then and for centuries afterward by hordes of savage robbers who fell upon and often slew without mercy any unfortunate travelers who happened to come in their way. Martin was attacked during his homeward journey; one of the robbers raised his weapon over the head of the saint, expecting, doubtless, to see him tremble and shrink. But even had he not been an intrepid warrior of Christ, Martin had not served in the Roman legions to show fear before a set of savages, no matter how fierce they might be. He stood undauntedly under the sword of his assailant, who presently dropped it in surprise.

"Hast thou no fear of death?" he demanded.

"None whatever," was the calm reply.

"What art thou, then?" asked the robber.

"I am a Christian, and a servant of the most high God," Martin said.

"And wherefore fearest thou not to die?"

"Because death is, to a Christian, but the beginning of life; and the King whom I serve is well able to save me from your hands

should such be His good will and pleasure," replied the saint. And the event proved the truth of his words, for the robbers were so much struck by what he had said and by his evident belief in the omnipotence of the God whom he worshiped that they laid down their weapons and begged him to tell them more of this unknown power. You may be quite sure that Martin desired nothing better. He taught these wild men with right good will, and the result was the conversion of the band. The robber who had raised his hand against the life of the saint became a religious later on, and in after years loved to tell to his brethren in the monastery the story of his conversion to the faith.

Some time after his journey into Italy Saint Martin founded a monastery and retired to it with some companions who wished, like him, to serve God in peace apart from the noise and tumult of the world. But the fame of his sanctity was soon spread abroad, and on the death of the bishop of Tours the people, who would seem in those days to have chosen their pastors, determined to place

Martin in the vacant see. But the good abbot was by no means anxious to become a bishop, being perfectly content to remain where he was. Those who knew him best were very certain that to drag him from his beloved retirement would be no easy matter. What was to be done? They hit upon a plan that succeeded, which was what they wanted, I suppose; and before we judge it or them too hardly we had better call to mind the fact that they lived before the invention of printing had rendered the injunction of Saint Paul to "do no evil that good may come of it" as well known and perfectly practised as you and I are certain it is now. A rich man who had tested Martin's charity in days gone by headed a deputation of the people of Tours, and leaving them at some little distance from the monastery, he proceeded alone to call upon the abbot, whom he beguiled with a sad story of the illness of his wife. Martin consented to accompany Ruricius—that was the name of the rich man—and they had proceeded but a very short distance from the monastery when they were surrounded by the

people of Tours, and the abbot was carried off in spite of all the resistance he could make. There was no escaping the honor he disliked so much, and Martin was carried to the Cathedral and consecrated bishop of the city and diocese which his sanctity has rendered famous to this day.

The religion of the Druids had not disappeared from France in the fifth century, and Saint Martin had to fight many a stout battle and to wage war against idolatrous practices, not only in and about Tours, but also in various other districts besides. He came once to a place where he found a great many temples and altars dedicated to the false gods. He overthrew them all without mercy and apparently without meeting very much resistance from the priests who were in charge. But when he prepared to cut down a huge tree which was looked upon as sacred, and held in great reverence, the case was altered, and the people refused to allow it to be done. Martin argued and insisted for a long time in vain, but at last the priests, hoping, it may be, to get rid of a troublesome

antagonist with whom they did not know quite how to deal, consented to cut down the tree on condition that Martin should stand beneath the branches and receive the mighty trunk when it fell. The bishop's followers were naturally somewhat averse to his accepting such a proposal, as we can readily believe; but he offered no objection, only stipulating that he should be allowed to spend a few moments in prayer before the tree was felled. The priests consented to this, and Martin, after bowing his head for a minute or two upon his hands, gave the signal for the commencement of the work. The Druids themselves hewed away at their sacred tree and presently the trunk, which was of enormous size, began to waver under the blows of their axes. It was tottering and bending above the saint, threatening every moment to descend and crush him beneath its weight, when he quietly raised his consecrated hand and made the sign of the cross in the air. The gigantic tree paused in its descent and as Martin waved his hand the great mass of leaves and branches

followed the direction he pointed out for it and fell on the side opposite to where he stood.

At another time he was unable to prevail upon the people in a village of his own diocese to throw down a temple to which they were much attached; and they became so angry with Saint Martin when he insisted upon its destruction that they drove the bishop from the place with sticks and stones. He retired to a short distance and kneeling spent the whole of the next three days and nights in prayer. At the end of that time two angels appeared to him and bade him go without fear to the place whence he had been driven and to pull down the temple and break the idols in pieces, for they would come to help him in the work by the order of God. So Martin returned to the heathen temple, and in the very presence of the men who had treated him so contumeliously he overturned their altars, set fire to the temple, and broke their idols to pieces, as the angels had commanded him to do. And by the arm of God the heathens were rendered powerless, and

not one of them dared offer the least resistance to Martin in his work.

There was near Autun, where, as you may perhaps have learned in your Church History, Saint Symphorian was buried, a famous College of Druids, wherein they received and instructed in all the knowledge of their schools young Celts who were anxious to learn the secrets which these priests were believed to possess. And indeed they were by no means ignorant, but had great store of knowledge which they imparted only to such as wished to become Druids like themselves. Saint Martin saw this College once when he came to Autun to pray at the tomb of Saint Symphorian, and he resolved that such a school of idolatry should not remain to teach the devil's lore to the young. He forthwith commenced to pull down the altars, and set fire to the College itself, whereat the Druids were so astounded that for some time they only stood and stared at him aghast. This mood did not last long, and a crowd of furious heathens rushed at once upon the holy man, who quite calmly went on with the work

of destruction without appearing to be one whit dismayed. Then one, more enraged than his companions, threw himself upon Martin, who at once threw back his mantle and presented his naked throat to his assailant. The heathen priest raised his sword to strike, when suddenly his arm lost its power and remained with the weapon suspended in the air. Then the would-be murderer fell upon his knees and, covering his face with his cloak, wept bitterly and demanded pardon of the saint. The bishop forgave him very readily, and he must have been imitated in his repentance by his companions, for the temple and College were destroyed and Martin built a church to the worship of the true God on the spot where they stood, under the invocation of the holy apostles Peter and Paul.

There are so many stories that might be told about Saint Martin that it would be quite impossible to find space for them all. We must be satisfied with one more. During one of his journeys the holy bishop was met by the governor of the province, who was riding in a chariot drawn by four horses. The road

was narrow and the sight of Saint Martin walking alone and wrapped in a long black mantle frightened the horses. They reared and plunged, and almost overthrew the grand chariot and its august occupant into the mud. The servants had much ado to get their equipage into right order; when this was accomplished they turned in a rage upon the innocent cause of the mishap. Seizing the good bishop, whom of course they did not know, they belabored him soundly, and abused him in not very choice language at the same time. At last they let him go, and he proceeded quietly upon his road without reproaching them or defending himself in any way. The attendants of the great man in the coach would have been glad to get on also, but their horses absolutely refused to move. In vain they were coaxed, beaten, and urged in every possible manner to proceed. They stood stock-still in the road and seemed determined to remain there all night. At last a passer-by happened to come along, and the soldiers of the governor, in despair, asked him if he had

met a traveler in a black mantle who had first almost upset their chariot and now by his bewitchments prevented the horses from pursuing their way. The man, who knew Saint Martin, declared that the person of whom they spoke was no wizard, but the famous bishop of Tours, and if they had offended or injured him in any way they had better follow him and implore him to forgive them if they desired to escape the vengeance of God. The soldiers, terrified, left the chariot and its occupant and ran after the holy man whom they had maltreated; speedily coming up with him, they went down on their knees and implored him to forgive them, as he readily did. As they returned to their master they met the horses dragging the chariot quietly along, and so they got safe into the city before night.

While traveling in Auvergne Saint Martin once stopped at a town called Arthonne, where the people paid great honor to a holy virgin named Vitalina, who had recently died there in the odor of sanctity. The bishop also went to pray at her tomb, and while there

bethought him to ask of Vitalina whether or not she were yet admitted to the beatific vision of God. A voice from the tomb made answer, and said she was not; but that she was still detained in a place of purgation until she should have satisfied the awful justice of the Most High. Hereat the people who were present were much astonished and, it may be, disappointed also, for they loved the holy woman who had dwelt amongst them and passed away in their midst, and they had always held her in great reverence and believed that she was ere now in bliss. Then Martin spoke again and asked Vitalina for what fault or imperfection she was detained in purgatory and prevented from entering into the presence of God. And again the voice made answer, and said that her happiness was deferred because while still in this life Vitalina had been exceedingly fastidious about the cleanliness of her face and had been too careful in washing her countenance often and well. Saint Martin left Arthonne and the tomb of Vitalina and proceeded on his journey to the capital of Auvergne, but he

did not forget the poor soul who was waiting so patiently for the hour of its release. He offered many prayers and Masses for Vitalina; and his prayers were heard and answered, for when he returned to the little town he knelt again at the tomb and asked the soul if she were yet admitted to the presence of God. The holy virgin answered sorrowfully, "No."

"Rejoice, my beloved sister," then said the bishop; "in three days you will enter into the glory of the saints." And three days after Vitalina appeared to some of her devout clients and told them that thanks to the prayers of the servant of God she had been admitted to eternal happiness, and that now the prayers which had been addressed to her should be presented to the divine Majesty and would receive a speedy answer. And all this certainly came to pass.

If any who read this are just a tiny wee bit given to vanity it might not be amiss to invoke Vitalina, who will assuredly come to their assistance. Perhaps she would extend her charitable aid to another class of delin-

quents who are not quite fastidious enough in the matter of water and soap. At all events, no harm could be done by trying.

Saint Martin lived to the age of eighty-four, and died at last at a town called Candes, whence his body was carried to his own Cathedral town of Tours and buried amidst the tears and lamentations of his sorrowing people. This great and holy bishop is still venerated and his intercession invoked, not only in France, but throughout the Christian world. He has been sometimes called Thaumaturgus, because of the many and great miracles which were performed at his intercession both during his life and after his death.

Saint Martin of Tours, pray for us.





The Imp and the Abbot.



SPIRIT of darkness was perched
on the wall
That circled and guarded a busy
town ;

And thence on the passengers great and small,
From his post of vantage the imp looked
down.

With his chin on his hands and his heels in
the air

And his tail waving lazily to and fro,
He drowsily blinked in the sunlight fair,
Or glanced at the crowds in the square below.

Far "less than archangel ruined" seemed he,
With his horns and his hoofs and his waving
tail,

As now he chuckled with spiteful glee,
And now with malice his lips grew pale.

An abbot chanced to pass by that way
Whose life in penance was passed, and prayer ;
And he civilly said to the imp, "Good-day !
Who are you ? and what are you doing there ?"

How gladly the imp had his tongue thrust
out !

To make a long nose how his fingers burned !
But he knew that abbot by old repute,
And resolved to wait till his back was turned.

So he answered politely, "I have no name ;
In the desert I labored many a year ;
And at last to the city for rest I came,
To watch over my master's interests here."

"Of your evil brethren," the abbot said,
"How many now in this town may be ?"
The devil grinned as he shook his head :
"In sooth, there is scarcely work for me.

"From early morning till late at night,
For fame, or gold, or to foil a foe,
The good folk struggle, and scheme, and
fight,
They need no help from their friends below."

“From the church,” said the abbot, with sorrowful face,

“The bells are ringing for praise and prayer;
Men throng the road to the holy place;
Find you no work for your master there?”

“I hate all churches,” the imp replied;
“But there, good Father, I need not be;
Store of distraction is well supplied;
Fashion and folly do that for me.

“But if you would know where our hosts
abound,
Thick as dew in the morning ray,
If you would see where our work is found,
Go back to the desert to fast and pray.

“Demons in chancel and choir are there;
Demons in garden, and cloister, and cell;
An imp is seated on every stair;
One clings to the clapper of every bell.

“At Lauds and Matins, at Tierce and Prime,
At Sext, None, Vespers, and Complin too,
From dawn of morning till midnight chime,
We all find more than enough to do.



Legend of Saint Lucy of Scotland.

SAINTE LUCY is said to have been the daughter of a king of Scotland, who was drawn by Our Lord to His special love and service even while quite a child. I do not know whether or not she felt a natural love for the pleasures of the world and for the gaieties and luxuries she might have enjoyed in her father's court; but I think that in all probability she did. People are not usually anxious to run away from pleasant things which they know will do them no harm, and Lucy longed to leave the palace and all the delights of the life she led there in order that she might serve Our Lord more perfectly and belong more entirely to Him. But it was not easy for a princess to leave her home. Her father loved her so much that he would never have consented to part with her, unless, in-

deed, some king or great prince had asked her hand in marriage, when without doubt she would have been given readily enough. Even now many people are quite willing to send their daughters as far as to the other end of the world when there is question of making a grand match, but will not hear of their devoting themselves to God in a convent in the next town. But Our Lord carries out His will now as He did then.

Lucy was once present in a church when a sermon was preached on the words of Our Lord to the young man in the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go—sell what thou hast and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me." She felt at once as if the words had been spoken to her, and determined at all hazards to leave all things and follow her divine Spouse. So she disguised herself in the dress of a poor servant girl, slipped quietly out of her father's palace and made her way to the seashore. We are not told by what means Lucy contrived to cross the sea, but even at that early day, for she lived probably in the

seventh century, vessels came and went between Scotland and France, and it was in the latter country that the young princess landed at last. She felt no fear at finding herself in a foreign country except that of being pursued and taken back, and traveled steadily on under the guidance of the providence of God.

No harm came to her, although she must have encountered many dangers, since a great part of France was in those days covered with deep forests which were the haunts of wolves and other savage creatures; and of hordes of robbers still more savage than they. Bridges and even good roads were few, and the journey across France from the coast to the banks of the Meuse must have been long and difficult. One would like to know through what adventures Lucy passed before she met with a rich peasant of Lorraine named Thibault who offered her shelter and support, being struck by the manner and appearance of the young stranger, so different from that of other girls whom he had known.

Thibault had neither wife nor children at

this time, for God had taken them to Himself, so Lucy agreed to accept his hospitality on condition of being allowed to labor like the other women in his employ. To this Thibault consented, and the Scottish princess learned to scrub and spin and tend the flocks of the farmer as though she had been to the manner born. She loved best to keep the flocks of sheep on the hillside, because there she could spin and pray in peace, while the gentle creatures, who have always been dear to the saints because of the Lamb without spot whose delight is to be with the children of men, grazed quietly around. The farmer soon learned that he had found a treasure in the maiden whom out of charity and compassion he had taken into his home. He treated her in all respects as if she were his daughter, and left her free to do exactly as she liked. But he lost nothing by his charity. Lucy worked as few daughters would have cared to do, often sitting up spinning until late into the night, and never ceasing her labors during the day except to pray or perform some act of charity for her neigh-

bors, especially for those poorer than herself. There was a cave or grotto quite close to Thibault's house where she used to spin and pray when not looking after her sheep. It was dug out of the solid rock and reached by descending twelve steps, so that it must really have been under ground, and in the wall a rough seat was hewn out of the stone, in which during the latter years of her life Lucy took the few hours of sleep which she allowed herself. This grotto or cave is still to be seen and the seat in the wall is called St. Lucy's armchair. But she loved best to work and pray under the tall trees of the forest, or seated on the green turf of the hill.

Once, while watching her sheep on the mountain and spinning industriously, Lucy was called suddenly away. She had to leave her flock to the care of the angels, so she stuck her distaff in the ground and told the sheep that they must not wander out of sight of it before her return. The creatures might have understood her words, or perhaps the angels really did keep them together, for Lucy found them all there when she came

back. She drove them to the fold as usual, but the hour was late, so it happened that she forgot her distaff and left it still sticking in the turf. I can not tell you how long it was before she remembered it, but when she came for it again a wonderful thing had occurred. The distaff had taken root, and very soon it put forth branches and leaves and became a tree. People came from far and near to see the tree which had grown from a distaff, and to carry away slips to plant near their own homes. It was a cherry-tree of a peculiar kind, and the good folk of Sampigny, which is the name of the village where St. Lucy lived, firmly believed that nothing quite like it had ever been seen before. The wood of the tree is red and very fragrant, and was once much prized by wood-carvers for their work. These people of Sampigny will assure you also that an old, old tree which still stands close to the little chapel built over the spot where St. Lucy sat and spun is the veritable one which grew from the distaff planted by her hand. They can not be persuaded that St. Lucy's cherry-trees, although they may

be found in many places and are fragrant everywhere, diffuse as sweet an odor anywhere else as at Sampigny.

But we have almost forgotten St. Lucy whilst speaking of her cherry-tree. In course of time her kind benefactor died and left all that he had to his adopted child. Lucy sold everything except the house, and this she converted into a chapel. Then she divided all that was left among the poor and went to live altogether in the grotto close by. There she remained until her death, which happened when she was about forty years old. All the people looked upon her as a saint, and her body was laid in a beautiful tomb of marble in the church which had once been her home. It is said that her father, after seeking her in vain for many years, traced his daughter at last to the little village by the Meuse, but Lucy had already been called to her reward. The king was determined, since he could not take her alive to Scotland, at least to carry home her precious relics. You may be sure that the people of Sampigny were grieved at having to give up all that remained to them

of their dear little saint; and it is very likely that they begged her to stay. At all events, the legend says that when the king had the casket which contained his daughter's body placed upon a chariot in order to take it away, no one could make the horses which were harnessed to it move one step. Subsequently he resolved to be satisfied with only a portion of the relics, leaving the rest in the church at Sampigny, and this was probably what St. Lucy wished, for as soon as the arrangement was completed the horses moved readily enough. In the course of ages several churches were successively built and destroyed on the site of the house of Thibault.

The last was sold as national property at the time of the French Revolution to a member of the Town Council of Sampigny. This man converted the church into a dwelling-house and had the relics of St. Lucy thrown into a charnel-house after breaking open the casket in which, many years before, they had been enshrined. But you will be glad to know that a Christian member of the Council contrived to take them away, and they were

divided among the pious inhabitants of Sampigny, each householder reverently guarding the portion of the sacred deposit confided to his care. When the churches were re-opened and the people were free to practise their religion once more, these pious Catholics enclosed their treasure in a wooden shrine which was surmounted by a statue of the saint, and she is still venerated and invoked by the inhabitants of her beloved Sampigny.

Saint Lucy of Sampigny, pray for us.





A Legend of the Rosary.



IN the bright land of fair Provence
A lowly orphan dwelt,
And day by day at Mary's shrine
The little maiden knelt.

No watchful mother's tender care
The child had ever known,
And so the simple peasant folk
Had called her Mary's own.

For orphans ever, so they said,
To Mary's care are given;
And children all of parents dead
Have twofold claim on heaven.

And as among the woods and fields
The little orphan grew,
The old church windows' storied panes
Were all the books she knew,

And surely for Our Lady's child
 No better books could be,
For of her Mother's life they showed
 Each wondrous mystery.

And never passed a day, whate'er
 The orphan's tasks might be,
But at Our Lady's feet she knelt
 To say the Rosary.

But once it chanced that wearied out
 She sought her humble bed
Forgetting quite that she had left
 Her Rosary unsaid.

When lo! within her little room
 She saw a wondrous light,
While floated round a sweet perfume
 From countless roses bright.

And by her bed a Lady stood,
 The orphan knew her well;
And from her royal mantle's folds
 . That wondrous fragrance fell.

She knew her by the twelve bright stars
 The radiant brow that crowned,
And by the mantle azure blue,
 With fairest roses bound.

The child kneels down, while love and awe
 Her wondering spirit fill,
When lo! upon Our Lady's robe
 A rose is wanting still.

And softly, sweetly, Mary spoke:
 “My child, these roses see,
The fragrant wreath thy love hath twined,
 From day to day for me.

“But wherefore hast thou left undone
 Thy work of love to-day?
How comes it that thou hast forgot
 My Rosary to say?

“So many on the great, wide earth
 Forget their Lord and me,
And bring no flower—but surely thou
 Wilt not ungrateful be?” •

The little child has bowed her head
In shame her breast upon;
And now that vision heavenly bright
Has vanished and is gone.

With tears the Rosary is said;
But ever from that day
The child drooped slowly like a flower
That fades from earth away.

As though she could not linger here
To whom it had been given
To see our gentle Lady dear,
In that brief glimpse of heaven.

And pilgrims to Our Lady's shrine
Would often go to see
Her grave whom Mary's self had taught
To say the Rosary.



Saint Odille.

A STORY OF ALSACE.



FEW years earlier than the middle of the seventh century there lived in Alsace, which then formed part of the ancient kingdom of Austrasia, a nobleman named Adalric, who, according to the old chronicler, rejoiced in the favor alike of God and men. He was descended through his father from Archambaud, the famous mayor of the palace who ruled France in the reign of Clovis II., and his mother was daughter to the king of Burgundy. Adalric inherited wide lands in his own right, and on his marriage with Berswinda, the beautiful niece of the bishop of Autun, he was made duke of Alsace with full power to govern the country as he would. Happily it was his will to govern wisely and well, and soon the love of a grateful people was added to the many advantages which this favored son of prosperity already enjoyed.

Perhaps there never was in this world anybody entirely happy, and in spite of the benefits showered upon him Adalric was far from being content. He longed passionately to see a son growing up at his knee to become the future owner of his possessions, which must otherwise pass either to a distant branch of his family, or, as was more likely to be the case, to some complete stranger who might happen to be in favor with the sovereign or his chief minister at the time of Adalric's own death or disgrace, if disgrace should occur. A king's favor was a matter in those days not to be too fully relied upon.

The Lady Berswinda was, as I have told you, very beautiful; and, what was far better, she was also very good. Like her lord, who loved her better than anything else he possessed, she longed for the blessing of children, and never ceased to importune Our Lady and the saints that in time they would obtain it for her from God. But the years passed on and her home was lonely, in spite of the gay company of knights and ladies who thronged its halls at times. The castle stood

at the foot of the mountain now called the Hohenberg, but in those days it was known by its old Roman name. The summit of the hill and some portions of its lofty sides were clothed with dense forests which were seldom trodden by the foot of man; so it is to be supposed that the noble duke and his compeers found hunting-grounds more to their minds on the plains, for, like all the barons of their time, they were devoted to the pleasures of the chase. But it came into the mind of the Lady Berswinda that it would be well to reclaim a portion of the forest and build a church upon the mountain, and a house whither she might sometimes retire in quiet, to offer up her prayers to God in peace. She mentioned her desire to Adalric, and he sent trustworthy officers with a guard of men-at-arms to ascend the height and seek for some convenient site whereon her house might be built. On their return from this expedition his messengers informed the duke that within the verge of the forest, and on the very summit of the hill, they had discovered the ruins of an immense building which must

have been raised there in old Roman times to the honor of the heathen gods. The walls were still standing and there were much stone and timber in the place. No more desirable spot could be found in all Alsace, they reported, for a summer palace; and from its lofty height it commanded a view of nearly the whole of his domain. So forthwith workmen were sent up the mountain, and soon a palace rose upon the Hohenberg, together with two fair churches dedicated, the one to Sts. Peter and Paul, the other to the patron saints of Alsace. Who these patron saints were, at that time, the old chronicler does not tell us; the Hohenberg has given to the Church many saints of its own since then. The piety of Berswinda and Adalric was speedily rewarded, for when did our good God allow His servants to surpass Him in generosity or love?

Scarcely were the two churches finished when the joyful news was spread throughout the land that in a short time the noble duke and his lady might be blessed by the birth of an heir. Great were the rejoicings

in all the towns and villages of Alsace, and many and fervent were the prayers offered in the churches and monasteries, of which there were already many in that land.

Among all who rejoiced none were half as glad as Adalric, who had nothing in this world left to wish for now. It never once entered his head that it might please the great Creator of all men to send a daughter to his noble house, or that the child who was soon to be born to him could be anything but perfect in body and mind. The sons of his race had all been strong men and tall; stalwart in body and gifted in mind. Of the daughters Lord Adalric thought not at all. So it came to pass that when a messenger rode down from the Hohenberg in hot haste and informed the duke that an heiress had been born to him he could not at first bring himself to believe the news, it seemed to him so utterly impossible that it could be true. When the cruel fact was at length forced upon his reluctant intelligence the bitterness of death filled his soul. He would never see the child who had brought disgrace upon his house,

for such, in his folly, Adalric considered the birth of the little daughter, whose name was to be held in honor in Alsace and throughout the Christian world long after his own would have been forgotten but for hers.

And the messenger had not told him the worst. Not only was the babe a girl, but she was blind. Nobody dared bear this grievous news to the father; indeed, in all probability it was not known to the nurses at first. But when some weeks had passed away, and the duke ascended the mountain to visit his wife, Berswinda, the truth could no longer be concealed. When he learned it his wrath was terrible, and he swore to his weeping lady that the child who had been the cause of such disappointment and had blasted all his fairest hopes should die. He had already spread the report that his expected heir had perished; and would have caused it to be put to death immediately after its birth had it not been for his regard for her. But he would not allow a blind girl to live as a witness to all men that God had forsaken his house. She should perish now, and the world should never know

that he had been dishonored by the birth of a wretch whose life could bring nothing but misery to herself and him. Berswinda, whose heart was breaking, for she could not love the poor, helpless, little one less because God had thought well to deprive it of the light of day, listened in silence to the threats of her lord. When he paused in his vengeful speech, because, in truth, he could for the moment find no more bitter words to say, she told him gently how sorely his disappointment grieved her, and how much she too had wished for a son. It would be, she knew right well, of no use to speak then of resignation to one whose soul had risen in rebellion against the holy will of God; but she begged him, for her sake, to spare the life of her first-born, and promised that if her husband would grant this petition she would send the child away where he should never see, nor perhaps even hear it spoken of again.

It may be that Adalric was glad of an excuse for sparing the innocent life. It seems almost impossible that a man who was good and just in his dealings with the people who

lived under his rule should have really wished to murder his own sightless little one. Perhaps he feared the effect which his brutal intent, if carried into execution, might have upon his wife. At all events, he told Berswinda to do as she would on condition that the babe was carried away, far from the Hohenberg, to some place where he would never see or hear of her again. Then he left the castle in order to give the lady an opportunity of fulfilling the promise which she had been only too glad to make. The poor mother dared not even keep the child long enough to have it baptized. She wrapped it in thick furs to protect it from the cold night air, and calling to her side a faithful maid who had lived with her from childhood, and who loved her mistress better than herself, she gave the babe into her care, bidding her guard it as she valued her salvation and bring it up in the love and fear of God.

Many were the tears shed at that parting, for neither of those who wept knew whether they might meet on earth again. The unconscious infant slept, happy in its ignorance

and all unmoved by the hot tears which fell upon its soft cheek from the eyes of its heart-broken mother and her women, who loved it for the sake of their gentle lady and would have risked their lives to save it if they might. At the hour of midnight the sobbing Thecla took the child in her arms and knelt at the feet of the duchess to entreat a blessing on herself and her charge. Berswinda laid her hands upon the maiden's head. "Watch over this infant," she said, "as though she were thine own, my Thecla. Be faithful and true to her as thou hast been to me; and may the Lord Jesus and His Blessed Mother have you both in their keeping now and forever." She uncovered the face of her sleeping baby, and pressed one passionate kiss upon the rosy cheek, whispering, "Farewell, my sweet one, until we meet in heaven"; and then Thecla rose and went away. She passed down a narrow stairway that led to a side door of the castle, and so over the bridge and into the dark wood.

The warder who allowed her to pass out knew upon what errand she was bent, and

tears coursed down his rugged cheeks, for he was a father and dearly loved his little ones at home. A stout serving man led and guarded Thecla through the forest till they came to the hut of a man who burned charcoal for the use of the castle at Hohenberg. He readily agreed to give hospitality until morning to a woman bound for a village on the other side of the mountain on business for the Lady Berswinda, without asking questions about her or the child. When Adalric came up the next day to the castle he found his lady pale and sorrowful and her women silent and sad. The little cradle had been removed from its place in the bower of the lady. The tiny garments worked with such loving care by the now heart-broken mother were all heedfully laid aside and hidden out of sight. The servants were sworn to secrecy and did not mention the little life which had gone out so sadly. It was as if the long-looked for heir had never been.

The duke led his lady down the mountain, and in the castle at its foot she entertained many a gay party as she had been wont to

do before the birth of the little one; for no one ever inquired for it, although many must have wondered at the sudden silence which now shrouded the existence of the long-prayed-for heir. Dark rumors went about sometimes of a living infant that had been seen at the Hohenberg some weeks after the duke had been known to lament over the death of his first-born, but whatever were their thoughts no one cared to provoke the wrath of the stern man by questioning the truth of what he willed to declare.

The years went by, and other children were born to Berswinda who filled the castle on the Hohenberg with gladness; and the music of young voices rang out through the green forest and down the sides of the mountain until the people were fain to bless God for His goodness in sending comfort to the sorrowful hearts of their beloved lady and Duke Adalric, who was ever a good lord to them. But the duke was an altered man from him who had built the churches and the castle on the Hohenberg in the days gone by. Berswinda too was changed. Her voice was as

sweet, her manner as gentle as of old; but her smile came seldom; and when glad mothers brought their baby girls, as they sometimes did in the joy of their motherhood, to show her, or to claim a pretty gift if they were her serving women or serfs, she would stoop to kiss the little ones and then turn weeping away. Then some among them shrewdly guessed that her heart was sore for the child who had so mysteriously disappeared, and had left behind not even a grave. Sometimes, when the duchess was alone on the Hohenberg and the Duke Adalric was in attendance on the king or busy in some distant part of his domain, a woman appeared on the mountain, and perhaps remained at the castle a few hours.

She always came alone, and always departed as she had come, and ever seemed to be in fear and trembling lest by some untoward chance she should come upon the duke. Her face was veiled both when she came and when she went; and she cared not to hold intercourse with any in the castle save with the Lady Berswinda alone. The women

dreaded to see this woman appear, for always after her departure the duchess locked herself in her chamber and wept. There were tales afloat in the villages on the hillside of a little girl of wondrous beauty whom some of the charcoal-burners had seen in a hamlet on the far side of the mountain, and whose manners were all unlike those of the peasant girls with whom she played. She was dressed like a princess, so said those who had seen her; the secret of her birth was known to none, and she was blind. Moreover, the age of this mysterious little one corresponded with what should have been that of the duke's daughter had she lived. These rumors reached the ears of the duchess and, terrified lest the duke should hear them, Berswinda sent for Thecla and asked, as many a time she had done before, about her child.

The answer was what it had ever been. The babe was growing always in grace and beauty, and in all the country was none other half so fair and sweet. A lovely boy was hanging on the lady's robe as she talked with Thecla and another smiled up at her from the

cradle where he lay. They were the children whom God had given her, and beyond all doubt she loved them well. But deep in her heart was a passionate longing to behold the blind daughter who had been sent by heaven in answer to her earnest prayer; and whose place no other, how dearly and lovely soever, might fill. But the child was not safe in her exile. Her angry father might at any time learn that she lived. Berswinda must forego the poor comfort of seeing and speaking with Thecla, and send her first-born still farther away. At Our Lady of Baume, a famous monastery in Burgundy, lived a sister of the bishop of Autun who had been as a mother to the duchess years before when Berswinda was sent to the convent, a motherless child. She was abbess now, and would gladly welcome to her heart and home the lonely little one who had never in her short life known any love save that of her faithful nurse. Thither, after taking a last sorrowful farewell of her beloved mistress, Thecla set out with the child.

Traveling was slow and wearisome in those

times, for the common mode of conveyance was a cart drawn by oxen and guarded by a band of men-at-arms. Thecla was well provided with money, and although the journey took some time she arrived safely in Burgundy with her little princess at last. At the convent her charge was received as a gift from heaven, and soon became the pet and plaything not only of the abbess, but of every Sister and pupil in the house. Thecla could not be prevailed upon to desert the babe whom she had nursed so faithfully, but remained with her as her waiting woman and most trusted friend. The princess was a nameless little one; she had not even yet been baptized, and for some reason which has not come down to us the sacrament that was to make her indeed a child of God was not conferred. I do not know by what name they called her in those years. Probably by one expressive of the love that was borne by all who knew her toward the gracious little maid. She learned to pray and sing, and even to do with her hands such work as might be taught to one who could not see. And it

was said that her very presence brought sunshine and gladness to the hearts of those about her, although the blessed waters of Baptism had not as yet been poured upon her brow.

There dwelt at that time in Bavaria a holy man named Erhard who was bishop of Ratisbon and a great servant of God. He had a brother as holy as himself who governed an abbey at no great distance from the court of Duke Adalric. He had formerly been bishop of Treves, but retired into a monastery in order that he might spend his last days in quietly serving God and preparing for death without any distraction of worldly cares. Erhard was on the eve of setting out to visit this brother, whom he tenderly loved, when he had a wonderful vision or dream. He thought that a beautiful angel with shining wings came to him and commanded him in the name of God to repair at once to the convent of Baume-les-Dames in Burgundy. "There," said the heavenly visitant, "thou shalt find a young servant of God who is not yet baptized. She has been blind from her

birth. Baptize her, and give her the name of Odille. At the moment of Baptism she will receive her sight." Erhard lost no time in setting out for the abbey where his brother lived, and Hidulphus was overjoyed when he came. The Bishop of Ratisbon told the story of his vision and Hidulphus bade him rejoice, for he had no doubt but that it was truly from God. He knew the story of the blind daughter of Adalric; how she had been cast out from her home and how her mother had wept for her during all those weary years. He offered to go to Baume with the bishop, and together the holy brethren set forth that very day. The fame of these two saints was already spread throughout the countries of Alsace and Bavaria, so that when they reached the convent they were gladly received by the abbess and her nuns.

Erhard lost no time in acquainting the superior with the business upon which he came, and she told him that there was in the convent at that moment a blind child who had been there almost from her infancy, and that she was really the daughter of Duke

Adalric, by whose cruelty she had been cast out from the home of her father's very soon after her birth. The holy man asked to see the little princess and when she came into the chamber where he was, he was attracted, like all who saw her, by her sweet and gracious manner, and he wondered at the knowledge she displayed when he examined her in order to prove that she was acquainted with the truths of the faith. Grand preparations were made for the ceremony of her Baptism, and while these were going forward the two bishops held frequent converse with the child. She had been told by the good abbess that the Duke of Alsace was her father, and she longed with her whole heart to visit her home and learn to know her mother and the brothers and sister whom God had sent to the Hohenberg after she had been so cruelly sent away. Hidulphus told her long tales of them all, for he knew them well; and most of all he told her of her eldest brother Hugh, a youth of such wondrous promise that the one prayer of the Alsatians was that he might be spared to succeed his father and govern

the land. He was the darling of Duke Adalric, who knew how to refuse him nothing, looking upon him, perhaps, as a pledge from heaven that God's anger had not fallen upon his house. There was a little sister too, Roswitha, whom the good abbot described as being rightly named, for she was indeed a white rosebud, fair and fragrant as the flowers in the convent garden, where he sat with the young princess while he told the tale.

So the days passed until all things were ready for the ceremony of holy Baptism. The church of the monastery had been hung with garlands and made glorious with wax tapers in preparation for the great event. Saint Erhard commenced the ceremony in presence of all the inmates of the house; according to the custom of the time, he held the blind girl by the hands and plunged her into the water, whence she was withdrawn by Hidulphus, while Erhard said as he anointed her eyes with holy chrism: "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ be thou enlightened both in body and soul." Those were ages wherein faith was strong. There was not one present but

expected a miracle and, as always happens when faith is strong, they were not disappointed. From that moment the maiden saw. Her heart was filled with rejoicing and so, we may well believe, were those of the holy bishops and the good nuns.

Erhard gave the child the name of Odille, which is said to mean "Daughter of light," or "God is thy Light." In either signification it was a beautiful name for the new Christian to whom light had been given in so wonderful a way. Soon after the Baptism of Odille the two saintly brothers returned to Alsace; but before leaving the convent Hidulphus promised the abbess and Odille that he would visit the Hohenberg before going back to his abbey in order to carry to the duke and Berswinda the glad tidings of the miracle which, by the goodness of the Almighty, had been worked in behalf of their once sightless child. Perhaps the little heart was stirred by an unwonted hope as the two saints turned away from the convent gate and Odille knew they were going toward her home—the home that she so longed to see. It may be that her mind

was filled with sweet visions of brothers and sisters, above all of the mother who had suffered so much in behalf of the little daughter from whom she had been separated so long. If this were so, Odille was doomed to be sorely disappointed. The duke welcomed Hidulphus to his court right royally and listened with a full heart, as it seemed, to the tidings of his first-born which the abbot brought. Berswinda looked with eager eyes at the face which in these latter years had grown so stern, in hope that it might at last relent.

But the duke softened not at all. He bestowed a wide domain on the abbey which Hidulphus governed, out of gratitude, as he said, to God who had wrought great things for his house—but he spoke no word of recalling Odille. It may be that his pride could not endure to look upon the child whom he had wronged; or perhaps he dreaded the judgment of his people and the scorn of those who long looked upon Odille as dead. But Hidulphus would not thus be put off. He asked Adalric if it were not well, now

that his daughter had grown in age and beauty, and had become, moreover, a marvel of virtue and all maidenly grace, that she should return to the home whence she had been absent so long, and take the place in his palace which she was so well fitted to adorn. Adalric coldly answered, No; much must be wanting to the education of a maiden who had never seen till now; and none were so capable as the good nuns of teaching her all that she should know. He would leave her yet a few years longer at Baume-les-Dames. Berswinda, when she heard this cruel sentence, turned weeping away, and Hidulphus, seeing that further words would be useless, left the Hohenberg and took the road to his abbey once more. But it chanced that the young Hugh, who was rarely absent from his father's side, had been present at this conference and his heart was on fire with love for this beautiful sister for whom God had done so much and of whom he had never heard till now. He eagerly questioned his mother, who gladly unburdened her heart to her son, for he was gracious in behavior and

had more than the wisdom of his eleven years. She counseled Hugh to say nothing to his father at this time, but ever to bear in mind the sufferings and long exile of his sister so that he might help her when he could.

Odille wept bitterly when the abbess told her that she might not yet see her home. The good nuns sorrowed with the child, while they could not help rejoicing that they need not lose the little one as yet. The abbess bade her apply herself to the patient learning of all those matters which it behooves a maiden of her rank to know and to trust to God, who had already done so much for her and who would bring her home in His own good time. Odille had learned obedience and resignation during her long years of blindness and exile, and moreover she trusted implicitly in the teaching of the abbess, who had filled a mother's place in those same years to the lonely child. She learned to read from the illuminated manuscripts which she saw the nuns copying with so much diligence and skill, and in time became an excellent copyist herself. She wove delicate fabrics of silk

and gold for the decoration of the altar and the church; and became skilful in the treatment of wounds and bruises (a necessary accomplishment in those warlike times) and in the nursing and care of the sick. Sometimes a messenger rode into the courtyard of the convent bearing a parcel or a quaintly worded letter wrapped in parchment and bound with a silken thread, and addressed to "The Most High and Excellent Lady, the Princess Odille"; or a traveling merchant would stop and inquire for the abbess that he might leave in her hands rich garments or ornaments which had been purchased for their little daughter by her parents in Alsace. Loving messages too came sometimes, delivered by noble cavaliers or saintly prelates who chanced to be journeying that way; for Baume-les-Dames was a famous house, and known throughout the country far and wide. It was well known now that the daughter of the Duke of Alsace was being brought up within its walls with other maidens of her own degree, since as we may well believe, neither Erhard nor Hidulphus cared to keep

such a secret, but were determined that justice should be done, in so far, at least, as it depended upon them. And so it came to pass that many loving letters passed between Odille and her brother Hugh, who had never ceased to love her since first he had heard her story from Hidulphus when he was only a child.

Six years had passed since the baptism of Odille, and she had grown into a fair and stately maiden of whom any king or emperor in the world might well have been proud. She had learned all that the good nuns were wont to teach the noble maidens committed to their care; and she longed more than ever to see her home, and the mother whom she loved most tenderly although she had never looked upon her face. From her father she had received no word or message, for the proud man could not bring himself formally to acknowledge the child whom he had treated so ill, but Hugh was her confidant and friend and to him she determined to apply. She begged him to petition the stern duke to allow her at least for a time, to return to the

Hohenberg, that so she might learn to know her mother and brothers and to show her love and reverence for him.

Hugh feared to present this petition to his father lest he should meet with a refusal, as had happened many times before; but he privately, without consulting any one, sent word to Odille to come. He wrote, moreover, to the abbess entreating her to provide his sister with a fitting escort and all things necessary for a journey into Alsace. He felt inly persuaded that when the duke should see his beautiful daughter of whom all who knew her spoke in praise he must needs relent and welcome her lovingly to his heart and home. Meanwhile the abbess and Odille believed that the message came through Hugh from his father and were greatly rejoiced. The maiden set herself to prepare loving tokens that she might leave with her friends in remembrance of the happy years she had spent at Baume-les-Dames, and wove with her own hands a veil of purple and gold for the image of Mary in the convent church. That veil was preserved during her life-time as a me-

morial of a pupil whom the nuns had dearly loved, and after her death it was cherished as the precious relic of a saint. When all things were in readiness Odille left the home of her happy childhood and started with the faithful Thecla on her long journey to Alsace. The old chronicler has handed down to us no particulars of that journey, but it must have been full of wonders for the young girl who had never been outside the convent walls since first she entered them, a sightless babe of three, in Thecla's arms. We must hope that it was full of pleasure and delight, gay with waving woods, and birds, and summer sunshine, for a terrible disappointment awaited the poor child when it came to an end.

It chanced that the duke was walking with his favorite son near his castle at the foot of the mountain, when he perceived in the distance a carriage drawn by oxen and escorted by a guard of men-at-arms. In this fashion the ladies of the time were accustomed to travel if the journey were too long to permit of its performance on horseback, and no lady was expected to arrive at the castle just then.

Who could this errant princess be? Some damsel of noble birth most certainly, since none other would travel in such state. The duke turned to his son, whose color heightened as he watched the advancing cavalcade. "Knowest thou aught of these strangers," he said; "or doth thy mother look for strangers to-day?" Then the truth must needs be confessed, and with faltering voice as he saw the dark frown that gathered on the brow of his father, Hugh declared that he had prepared a pleasant surprise for his Highness by bringing his sister to her home, and pleaded with all the warmth of a generous spirit for her, his mother, and himself. But all the time a very tempest of passion and mortified pride was shaking the stern, relentless soul of Duke Adalric to its depths, and as the carriage drew close to the spot whereon he stood he raised his clenched hand and with giant strength smote his son to the ground. Odille dismounted to find her brother lying senseless at her feet and her distracted father kneeling by his side, aghast at his own deed. Hugh was only stunned, and soon re-

covered sufficiently to rise to his feet. Then the duke turned to the daughter whose unlooked-for return had provoked him to such unwonted passion.

Kneeling before her angry father, Odille besought him to pardon her for coming uninvited into his presence, for she saw now that so it must have been. Won by her meek gentleness, Adalric led her into the castle and presented her to the mother who had wept and longed for her for so many years. It would surely seem now that the troubles of Odille were ended, but it was not so. Her presence in his house was a constant reproach to the proud man who had wronged her, and he could not endure to have her in his sight. On the very day of her return the Duke sternly told Berswinda that, since Odille had thought proper to leave Baume-les-Dames, she need not, for the present at least, return thither; but as she had come in disobedience and by no will or command of his, he would not look upon her face again. So the eldest daughter of the ducal house lived apart in her mother's chamber, as if she had been

guilty of a crime, and never appeared among her brothers and sister save in church. Even at table, where the whole household dined in common according to the custom of the time, she was not allowed to take her seat. She lived like one in disgrace, and this was the harder to bear because her whole heart went out in passionate love to her father. But she was never known to complain. She spent what time she might with her mother and brothers, and loved to teach the little Roswitha all that she herself had learned from the sisters at Baume. She sought out the sick and suffering among the folk who dwelt about the court, and made to herself friends among the poor. At heart she must often have been sad, for at best her life was a lonely one. She could not but see that her mother, much as she loved her, wished that she had remained in the convent, where at least she had been happy in the affection of the nuns and had enjoyed the companionship of other noble maidens of her age. Perhaps Odille wished it also, but if so she never mentioned her wish,

Her constant friend and most beloved companion was her brother Hugh, who, while reproaching himself bitterly for having added to the burden of his sister's cross, already heavy enough, declared nevertheless that she was the light of his life, and that without her the palace would be dreary and dull. The faithful Thecla was no longer in the service of her princess, for Adalric would not suffer her to remain in his house. He rewarded her generously for her long years of devoted care, gave her wherewithal to buy a small house and spend the remainder of her life in comfort, and then declared to his wife that he would see her no more. Thecla was entreated by Berswinda to remain in Alsace, for with a sorrowful heart the duchess was compelled to acknowledge to herself what she would not for worlds have confessed to another, that she lived in fear lest a time might come when she would be once more be compelled to claim the protection of her old nurse for Odille. But that day never came.

Paternal love was not entirely dead in the heart of the duke; and unknown to all he

used to watch his eldest daughter, than whom there was no maiden half so graceful nor so fair to look upon in all his wide domain, as she taught or played with her little sister, strove patiently and lovingly withal to fulfil the thousand requirements which brothers are ever apt to demand, waited on her mother, or set forth on errands of charity to the sick and poor. Many a prayer had gone up to heaven from the huts on the Hohenberg, and from the more stately homes that gathered round the ducal palace on the plain, that God and Our Lady might deign to soften the heart of the stern man—and such prayers are seldom made in vain. One day as Odille set forth from the castle on the Hohenberg, attended by one of the duchess's maidens and laden with a basket containing food and wine for a sick old woman who dwelt in the forest near by, she was met by her father, who stopped when he saw her and looked upon her more kindly than had ever been his wont when by accident she had crossed his path before.

“Whither goest thou, my daughter?” he

gently inquired; and Odille could scarcely answer for the quick beating of her heart.

"I go to visit an old servant of my mother's who is sick, so please you, my lord," she faltered at last, with downcast eyes, for she dared not look into the face of her father which to her had ever been so stern. But the grace of God had touched the hitherto hard heart of Adalric, and it was in a strangely gentle voice that he said:

"Thou hast suffered much at my hands, Odille; I have wronged thee, my daughter. Pardon me, I beseech thee, and I promise thee on the cross of my sword it shall be so no more." Odille could hardly believe she heard aright, but with eyes bathed in tears she sank at the feet of her father, and covered with kisses the hand which until then she had never dared to touch. Adalric raised her up and embraced her, and for the first time Odille felt upon her brow a father's kiss.

There were rejoicings that day, not alone in the castle on the Hohenberg, but everywhere throughout the duke's domain. And now a new life began for Odille. As though

to atone for the neglect with which she had been treated hitherto, the duke showered caresses on his beautiful child and seemed unable to bear that she should be out of his sight. Grand festival was held in the palace and the lovely princess was presented to all the princes and nobles of the land. Berswinda grew young again in the joy of beholding her eldest-born at last seated in her rightful place, and Hugh was radiant with happiness. Pleasantly the days went by; and it may be Odille feared lest life on earth might become too pleasant. She had never forgotten that when all others, even the parents whom He had given her, had appeared to forsake and forget her, God in His great, untiring love had first led her to her peaceful home at Baume-les-Dames and afterward, in His own good time, restored her sight. Her life belonged to Him. She had promised long ago that it should be only His. Surely, now that He had granted the desires of her heart, it was time to return to Him. So, after a while, with all sweetness and reverence she laid before Berswinda and the duke her request that

she might be permitted to take the habit of religion in her dear old home at Baume-les-Dames.

She never dreamed of meeting a refusal, and deemed in her simplicity that the father whose love had come so late must needs be glad at heart to find the daughter who for so long had held no place in his home so well bestowed. Odille was mistaken, for the times had changed since Thecla had crept with fear and trembling into the forest with a helpless, blind baby in her arms, now nearly twenty years ago. The helpless baby had grown into a fair and gracious princess of whom the poor whom she loved so dearly were wont to declare that she was rightly named, for that God indeed was her light. The fame of her beauty and rare virtue had gone abroad, so that not in Alsace only, but in France and Germany as well, men spoke the praises of the daughter of Berswinda and Adalric, and her hand was sought in marriage by the noblest in the land. But Odille knew nothing of all this. In her humility she thought that she was only tolerated in her father's house,

and that he would hold the day a happy one that should witness her return to Baume-les-Dames. Now, Adalric was as far from expecting this request from his dearly beloved child as Odille from anticipating a refusal; and it came upon him like a thunderclap. To make matters worse, he had more than half promised her hand to a bold baron whose domain lay near his own and whose alliance he was anxious to secure. Berswinda too earnestly wished for the completion of this marriage as a means of securing the companionship of the long-lost child who had so lately been restored to her arms. It would seem that the duke was alike selfish in love and in hate. He absolutely refused to grant the request of Odille.

It was all in vain that she urged a promise made at her baptism in gratitude for the blessed gift of sight. A child of twelve years old, he said, had no right to make such a vow without the consent of her parents, forgetting that he had refused to acknowledge her at that very time, or even to look upon her face; and that if the good Sisters had then received

her into their house, young as she was, he would have considered her entrance into religion as a happy release for himself. But when excited by passion men are apt to be unjust, and Adalric was little accustomed to see any try to cross his will. He did not treat his daughter unkindly; his love for her was stronger than his hatred had once been. But he bade her put all notions of returning to the convent out of her head because he had other designs for her and it was her duty in all things to obey. Now, the vow made by Odille at her baptism had been made with his knowledge and consent, and she held herself to be truly bound by it; and thus it happened that sorrow and unrest came once more to dwell upon the Hohenberg. The maiden grew pale and sad, and her mother feared that she would fade away and perhaps die if the threatened marriage were forced upon her; so she begged the duke to consent to his daughter's will. But his mind was fully made up that Odille never should return to Baumesles-Dames. He could not live without her, he said, and if she were wedded to the baron

he might, if he so willed, see and converse with her every day. The betrothal should take place at once, and when she found there could be no escape Odille would learn to be content. So he sent word to the baron to come to the Hohenberg and there he should be betrothed to Odille.

The princess knew nothing of this plan by which she was to be entrapped, until one of her attendants told her that the baron was riding up the mountain attended by a gallant train, and that great preparations were being made in the chapel for some ceremony she knew not what. Then Odille flew to her mother and implored her to tell her the truth, but Berswinda answered only by her tears, and the maiden felt that the crisis of her fate had come. She must escape the doom that threatened her—but how? Then she remembered her faithful nurse, Thecla, who dwelt far away on the other side of the mountain it was true, yet not so far but that Odille had visited her cottage more than once. With a throb of joy she recalled her father's saying that he would not even know whither his

wife's old servant had retired, and so she would be doubly safe. She stayed for no preparations; in truth, there was no time to lose, for the duke with his intended son-in-law was almost at the castle gate. Breathing a fervent prayer to Our Lady and her guardian angel, Odille slipped out by a postern-gate and made her way into the wood.

She traversed a forest path for a short distance and then turned to descend the steep hill. Scarcely had she commenced the descent when she knew by the shouts and cries which arose from the castle that her flight was discovered and that in a very few moments the pursuit would begin. The fear of being taken and forced into a marriage with the baron gave wings to her feet, but her father and his companions were mounted and she could almost hear the clatter of the horses' hoofs as they galloped down the rocky road. What could she do? One earnest, breathless prayer to the Virgin Mother of her Lord went up from the terrified heart of Odille, and she looked around in the wild hope of finding some hiding-place in which

she might conceal herself until her pursuers should pass by. And then a marvel occurred such as we sometimes read of in the lives of God's saints. She was coming to a turn of the road; on either side of the path rose steep walls of rock overhung in many places by thick masses of ivy and wild vines.

Now one of these masses of thickly tangled greenery was swept aside as if by an invisible hand; behind it Odille saw a cave of whose existence she had never known before, often as, in her errands of mercy, she had traversed the hill. In an instant she had slipped into the friendly shelter, while the ivy fell before the opening and hung as it had done before. Down came the duke, the baron, and their men, and galloped past the very place where Odille upon her knees was gratefully thanking God and Our Lady, who had heard the cry of their faithful servant and promptly came to her aid in her distress. Adalric rode in hot haste to the bottom of the hill and sought for traces of his daughter, but in vain. He was compelled to return to the castle with his train, and there he gave orders that the

fugitive should be sought in all directions, far and wide. I need scarcely tell you that his commands were faithfully carried out, and for weeks his retainers scoured the country in the hope of finding the lost girl. It was in vain. She seemed to have disappeared as completely as if she were no longer upon the face of the earth. But did she remain in the cave all the time?

No, indeed. She waited until all her pursuers had returned to the palace, then crept from her retreat and once more took her way bravely down the hill. How she found her way to the place whereon the town of Fribourg now stands the old chronicler of her life does not say, but thither she went, and in all probability took refuge once more with Thecla, the faithful guardian of her lonely childhood, who would certainly have welcomed her with open arms. On the Hohenberg there was consternation and dismay. The heart of Berswinda was torn with anxiety and Adalric bitterly regretted having tried to force a marriage on Odille. For six months they mourned her loss, and then the

duke, despairing of recovering his lost treasure without the intervention of the God by whose aid she had escaped, made a vow that she should consecrate herself to Him in holy religion so only he might find her again. He made his vow known by proclamation throughout the state, and in due course it came to the ears of Odille.

She had longed for nothing more than to return to those whom she so tenderly loved, if only she might do so without breach of her duty to God. Very soon she came back to the Hohenberg and, falling at the feet of her parents, besought them to pardon her flight. They were ready enough to do this, for the joy of once more beholding the daughter whom they had looked upon as lost made them forget the trouble and anxiety they had suffered since her departure from home. The baron had long since departed, and when Odille reminded her father of his promise he assured her that she was free to do as she would, only he besought her not to desert himself and her mother in their old age, but to found a house for consecrated virgins in

her native land Alsace. And he promised to endow such a house with lands and large grants of money and to build for her a convent in whatsoever place she might choose. Then Berswinda, thinking that her daughter must needs love the castle on the Hohenberg, and judging moreover that it would be hard to find another spot as well suited for a monastery as that, offered to give up her summer palace to Odille. So the great castle on the mountain was converted into a convent, and very soon Odille took up her abode in her old home with a hundred noble maidens who wished, like her, to dedicate their lives to God. As the years went on the fame of her sanctity went abroad through the country, and many nobles and princes sent their daughters to be brought up under her care.

When Adalric and Berswinda felt old age coming on they longed to spend the remaining years of their life near their beloved child. So, leaving the charge of the dukedom to their eldest son, they retired to the Hohenberg, where in course of time Berswinda died in the arms of Odille. Shortly afterward

Adalric also passed away in peace, lamenting the cruelty with which in her infancy he had treated the daughter who was destined by God to be the comfort and support of his last days.

The holy abbess herself lived to be very old, and to see her nieces grow up at the convent on the Hohenberg in the love and fear of God. Before her death Odille built another convent at the foot of the mountain, because the hill was too steep to be climbed by the aged and infirm whom it was her great joy to relieve. And every day she went down the mountain to tend and console the patients in the hospital which she added to the convent at the foot of the hill, until she was so old and weak that she could no longer walk except with the aid of a stick. The people loved her dearly and looked upon her as their mother while she lived. After her death her name was connected with that of Duke Adalric, and she is still spoken of, even by non-Catholic writers, as one of the founders and promoters of civilization in Alsace. She was buried on the Hohenberg in

a chapel which she herself had built in honor of St. John Baptist, who is said to have appeared to her there. For several centuries pilgrims came from all parts of Alsace to do honor to the relics and entreat the intercession of their beloved patroness Odille; but after the Reformation her relics were hidden for some time, and the convent on the Hohenberg was even deserted for a while. Of late years her tomb has been restored, holy priests have taken charge of her ancient convent, and her shrine is visited by pilgrims again. She is the saint of patience, meekness, and unshaken perseverance in right. Like almost all of the great servants of God, she was especially distinguished for her love of His poor, and many stories are preserved of the wonders worked at her intercession in their behalf.

Once a poor leper came to the convent whose body was in so frightful a state from disease that it gave out a horrible odor, and nobody would go near him. Odille herself came to attend to the poor creature, but in spite of her almost invincible charity she too

shrank from approaching him. But then, calling to mind that Our Lord had "become as a leper, and as one struck by God, and afflicted," she threw her arms about this miserable object, kissed his sores, and served him with food. Afterward, finding that no one cared to carry him into the hospital, and unable to do this herself, she threw herself on her knees beside the leper and exclaimed: "O Lord, I beseech Thee of Thine infinite mercy, either to cure this poor man or to give him patience to endure his sufferings for love of Thee." Her prayer was heard. The leper was healed, and all the bystanders glorified God and marveled at the charity of His servant.

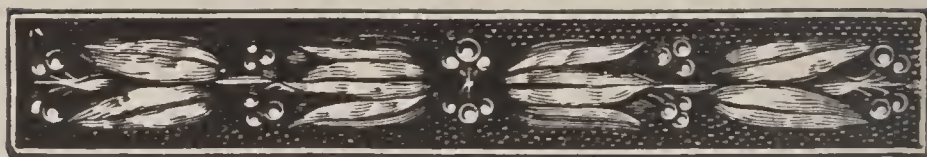
On another occasion, when Odille had grown very feeble and old, while returning one day from the hospital at the foot of the Hohenberg, she saw a poor man lying on the ground, apparently dying from thirst and fatigue. No house was near, and Odille could no longer run as she had done long ago when pursued by her father and his knights. But her faith had not grown less; so she struck

the hard rock by the roadside with her staff, and immediately a stream of clear water sprang out of the stone. The weary traveler drank and was refreshed so that he was enabled to climb the hill and reach the hospital. The miraculous fountain soon became celebrated for the cures effected by its waters, and is visited by crowds of pilgrims to this day. Odille was chosen as the patron saint of Alsace, and her beloved Hohenberg received in her honor the name of Mount St. Odille.

It rises between Alsace and the Vosges Mountains and overlooks a vast plain, commanding a view of twenty towns and three hundred villages separated from each other by fertile meadows, wide forests, fruitful vineyards, and fields intersected by streams. The Rhine rolls through the midst of this beautiful country, and a road overshadowed by fine trees, which is often traversed by pilgrims to the shrine of Odille, leads up to the summit of the Hohenberg. The church and convent were many times destroyed; sometimes by contending armies, for Alsace has been

the battle-ground of nations more than once; sometimes by fire. But the tomb of Odille was always preserved. It still exists, and when it was opened in the middle of the last century the relics of the saint were placed in a rich case and set, for the veneration of the faithful, upon the altar which bears her name. Should you be commanded at any time by those in authority to act against the dictates of your conscience, do not lose faith or courage, but call with confidence on God, Our Lady, and Saint Odille.





The Lily.

From the German.



MAIDEN said to a Lily,
"I go to a dance to-night;
Wilt thou nestle among my
tresses,

O Lily, so pure and white?"

But the Lily answered, "O Maiden,
I should droop in the heat and glare;
And die in thy shining ringlets;
Place the glowing carnation there."

A bride saw the Lily blooming;
"I go to the altar to-day;
In my bridal garland, sweet Lily,
I will twine thy beautiful spray."
"Why sadden thy bridal, Lady,
By wearing my cold, white flowers?
Sweet roses and orange-blossoms
Should gladden the joyous hours."

A mother wept o'er the Lily;
"In thy pallid beauty rare,
Thou shalt lie on my dead child's bosom,
For surely thy place is there."
"O mourning, sorrowful Mother,
Thou hast seen one blossom fade;
On the shroud of thy broken lily
Be a wreath of immortelles laid."

A young girl whispered, "O Lily,
Let me place thee on my breast!
For the dear Lord Jesus cometh
To-day in my heart to rest."
And the Lily murmured, "Yes, Maiden;
On thy heart let my blossoms lie;
That my pure white petals may wither
Near the Lord of Purity."





Our Lady of Miracles.



IS it merely a fancy of my own that the study of history has gone out of fashion, or is it really the truth? I have been wondering about that lately, and can not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. What do you think about it, children? It is not a hundred years since some clever girls—I assure you that they believed they knew much of many things, and I dare say they did—endeavored to persuade me that Shakespeare and Dickens were Americans, and that George III. of England was grandfather to Queen Elizabeth. Moreover, they thought me rather an incredulous personage when I declined to accept these statements as fact. Oh! I hear you exclaim. But I did not invent the story. However, in justice to these erudite young persons, I must add that they understood all about square and cube root and were not to

be puzzled by the examples in the general review. And this is not all. One of those girls begged permission to call at the butcher's as she came to school and procure the eye of an ox, which she wished me to dissect for the class, besides proposing some other experiments of a like nature which I had the bad taste to consider rather unpleasant, and lacked the skill to perform—as anatomy was not considered to be a necessary part of a feminine education when I went to school. But if any among you (and I have no doubt that there are a great many) love to read “the stories of the days gone by,” you must, I think, have noted how often it has happened for some inscrutable reason that the sons of great men have been altogether unworthy of their progenitors, as in the cases of the successors of Constantine, Theodosius the Great, Charlemagne, and most and saddest of all, in that of the children of Clovis and Clotilde, the first Christian rulers of France.

The savage nature seems never to have been extinguished in their descendants until generations of indulgence in all the lowest

and fiercest passions that can disgrace the soul of man has its natural conclusion in the helplessness and imbecility of the sluggard kings. But sometimes among the tales of horror and cruelty which were but too common in those early days we find a delightful legend of Mary or the saints, just as we come upon a tuft of primroses or a few fragrant violets half buried under a heap of withered and decaying leaves. And such is the story of Our Lady of Miracles at Mauriac which I am going to set down for you now. Perhaps in reading the history of St. Clotilde you have learned that besides many sons she had one daughter, who bore her mother's name and was married when quite young to the half-savage king of the Visigoths, who treated her barbarously on account of her faith (you know the Visigoths were Arians) and who was at last conquered and slain by her brothers, who were themselves little better than he, in revenge for the ill treatment offered to their sister Clotilde.

But tradition tells us of another daughter of Clovis. I believe she is said by some to

have been his granddaughter, but I like to think that Clotilde was her mother, whose name was Theodechilde. This princess was the proprietress of some wild lands in a place known at that time as Montselis, and afterward called Chateau Vieux. The young Theodechilde, she could not have been more than fifteen, and in all probability was even younger than that, sometimes came to spend the summer in a house which she owned at Montselis, and she loved on quiet and moonlit evenings to stand at a narrow loophole which served for a window and look across the open country at the belt of dark forest which surrounded her home. She must have been a simple-hearted, loving child, for to such we always find the Queen of heaven sends her choicest favors. Perhaps she sees in their nature some faint reflex of her own. The princess was in all probability very happy, for her father was still living and the wickedness of his sons had not yet brought misery on France; and we may suppose that she was beautiful, seeing that she was the child of Clovis and Clotilde.

It happened one night as Theodechilde stood at her window gazing as usual at the forest which always had so mysterious a charm for her, and wishing that the moon would break forth, for the night was very dark and even the stars were hidden behind thick masses of clouds, she saw within the circle of trees a radiance that was not of moonlight, and she marveled greatly whence and what it could be. She had never beheld so soft and beautiful a light, and she longed to go down to the forest and find out for herself the meaning of so strange a thing. But little maidens might not go out alone after nightfall in those days any more than in these—and, as I have said, Theodechilde must have been very young. Like children of our own time too, she was unwilling to speak of what she had seen; perhaps from a fear of being laughed at and set down as a fanciful girl who was ready to coin a fairy-tale or a ghost-story out of every jack-o'-lantern or traveler's torch that passed by. But she looked out the next night, and to her great delight, there, just within the verge of

her beloved forest, shone the wondrous light again.

In her heart a soft voice seemed to whisper that there was something that must be sought out and made clear. On the next day she told her nurse of the light that she had seen, and begged the woman to go with her that night into the forest and find out what it might be. We must suppose that the good woman, in spite of her love for her princess, whom she seldom contradicted you may be sure, was unwilling enough to grant such a request; but Theodechilde was the true daughter of a determined race, and would not be gainsaid. That night she crept out of the castle and went softly toward the wonderful light that seemed to send forth long fingers of flame to beckon her toward the wood. When she reached the spot whereon the fire was burning—the fire that was all radiance shed perhaps by angels whom the princess could not see—she found that in the midst of the flames which encircled it as with a bower of light stood a statue of the Mother of God holding in her arms the holy Child. Whence

had it come, and by whom had it been fashioned, that wonderful image of the Queen of angels and of men? Theodechilde knew not, nor shall we ever know.

Reverently and fearlessly the brave girl stepped through the encircling flames and took into her arms the figure which she deemed had been sent to her from heaven, and thus laden she returned to her home. But the next day she gave orders that a chapel should be erected on the spot whereon the image had appeared; and as soon as it was finished she deposited her treasure therein. The wonderful story soon went abroad, and many pilgrims flocked to the chapel in the forest to pray before the statue that had been sent to dwell there in so marvelous a way. If some came from curiosity, many more came to pray, and soon our blessed Mother rewarded the faith and love of her children by granting all sorts of favors and graces to those who honored her there. Sight was restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb. Cripples left their crutches hanging by the altar, and went re-

joicing on their way; while those who were sad or bowed down by sorrow found help and consolation at Our Lady's feet. So in course of time the shrine came to be known as that of Our Lady of Miracles, because of the wonders that were wrought.

I wish that I could tell you more of the favored maiden to whom the statue was so strangely made known, but unfortunately I can not. It is the lot of many of Mary's best beloved children to remain in obscurity; but I hope that we may meet her in heaven. The statue of Our Lady is still on earth in the church which long ago took the place of the little chapel built by Theodechilde, and many pilgrims still go there to pray. It is not exactly what we should feel inclined to call beautiful; both Mary and her divine Child are as black as can be; a fact not to be wondered at when we consider for how great a length of time they must have been there. I think that the Blessed Mother loves those old images that have become blackened by the dust of ages, for I know of more than one at whose feet wonderful favors have been ob-

tained. Pope Pius IX. loved and honored Our Lady of Miracles, and sent a diadem of gold and precious stones to adorn her statue, wherewith she was crowned in the May of 1855, in presence of an immense crowd of her devout children, who assembled at Mauriac to do honor to their Queen, and of several bishops and a great number of priests. I say at Mauriac for, in the far-off days of the Merovingians, a few cottages began to nestle at the foot of Our Lady of the Forest, as the shrine was called at first; and these increased in number and importance, until the little settlement became a town which took that name.

Of all the miracles that took place there I have only space for one, but the story of that is so wonderful and besides so suggestive of comfort to us who may scarce hope to visit Mauriac that I must set it down for you here. It happened that during the war with the infidels in Spain two knights from the far-off land of Theodechilde were taken prisoners by the Moors. Both were devout clients of Our Lady, and many a time in their

childhood had knelt at her shrine in the forest and besought her to care for them throughout life. Now, when they were thrown into a horrible dungeon and treated as only the Moors could treat Christian captives whom they hated for their faith, they recalled the graces which she was wont to bestow upon her children, and entreated her to help them as she had been accustomed to do when their necessities were so much less than at this time. And praying thus they fell asleep. Early next morning some laborers on the way to their work turned aside for a few moments to pay their devotions at the shrine of Our Lady at Mauriac. When they reached the door of the church they found lying on the threshold two men of strange habit and uncouth appearance who were bound with heavy fetters and both fast asleep. The peasants ran in haste to summon the priest who had charge of the church, and when he came to the place he marveled much to see the men. It was long before they could be awakened, but when at last they opened their eyes and looked around they were as men in a trance,

and asked the people in astonishment where they might be. When these answered that they were lying at the door of Our Lady at Mauriac the two knights knelt in wondering adoration of the God who gave such power to His mother; and there before the crowd which had gathered they told their marvelous tale. How they had been taken in Spain and thrown into a dungeon by the infidels, how they had called upon Our Lady of Mauriac, and she had borne them in slumber even to her holy place.

The fetters they had worn were hung up in the sanctuary in testimony of the miracle that had been wrought, and were kept there for many hundreds of years. On the great festivals of Our Lady and more especially on the ninth of May, which is the feast of her church at Mauriac, these fetters were carried in procession, and devoutly kissed by all those who had the happiness of being present as pilgrims at the shrine. Perhaps some of you may visit it some day, for even children travel almost all over the world in these restless times, but many of us can not hope to enjoy

that happiness. What can we do? We may remember the kindness shown long since by our dear Lady to the knights of Mauriac and ask of her with confidence, as they did, for whatever we wish to obtain. The arm of the Lord is not shortened, nor is His love for His Blessed Mother less than it was. Ask for a much-needed conversion which can be brought about by nothing short of a miracle, children; Our Lady will grant it to your prayers.

Our Lady of Miracles, pray for all poor sinners.





Brother Paul and Brother John.



SAID Brother Paul to Brother John:

“In fair or cloudy weather,
These many years we’ve jour-
neyed on

The way to heaven together.

“And never yet hath aught occurred
To raise a storm or riot;
No hasty blow, no angry word,
Hath e’er disturbed our quiet.

“But in the world without, they say,
Are peace and calm found never;
Where’er they dwell, by night and day,
Men are at war forever.

“Tell me, I pray, why this should be,
Since God made all men brothers;
And wherefore peace for thee and me
Is easier than for others.”

Said Brother John to Brother Paul:

“The peace that’s God’s best blessing,
My Brother, ever rests with all
Who love not vain possessing.

“If thou and I the things of earth
Should seek with much contriving,
Soon should we lose God’s holy mirth,
And know the pain of striving.”

Said Brother Paul: “If this be so
I pray thee try, my Brother;
For how men feel I fain would know
When they resist each other.”

Said Brother John: “Then take this stone
Whereon our pitcher resteth;
Henceforward it shall be his own
Who best the prize contesteth.

“I say ’tis mine.” “And so say I,”
Quoth Brother Paul; “so take it.”
“Nay, thou art wrong,” John made reply;
“No quarrel this will make it.

“Say thou: the stone is mine.” “ ’Tis mine,”
Cried Paul, obedient ever;
“Thou speakest sooth; ’tis truly thine,”
Said John, “and mine was never.”

’Twas all in vain they strove to fight;
Each to the other yielded;
And so they passed thro’ life’s dark night
By God’s best blessing shielded.

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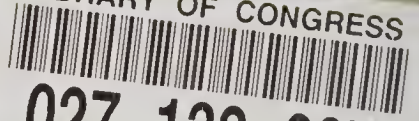
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